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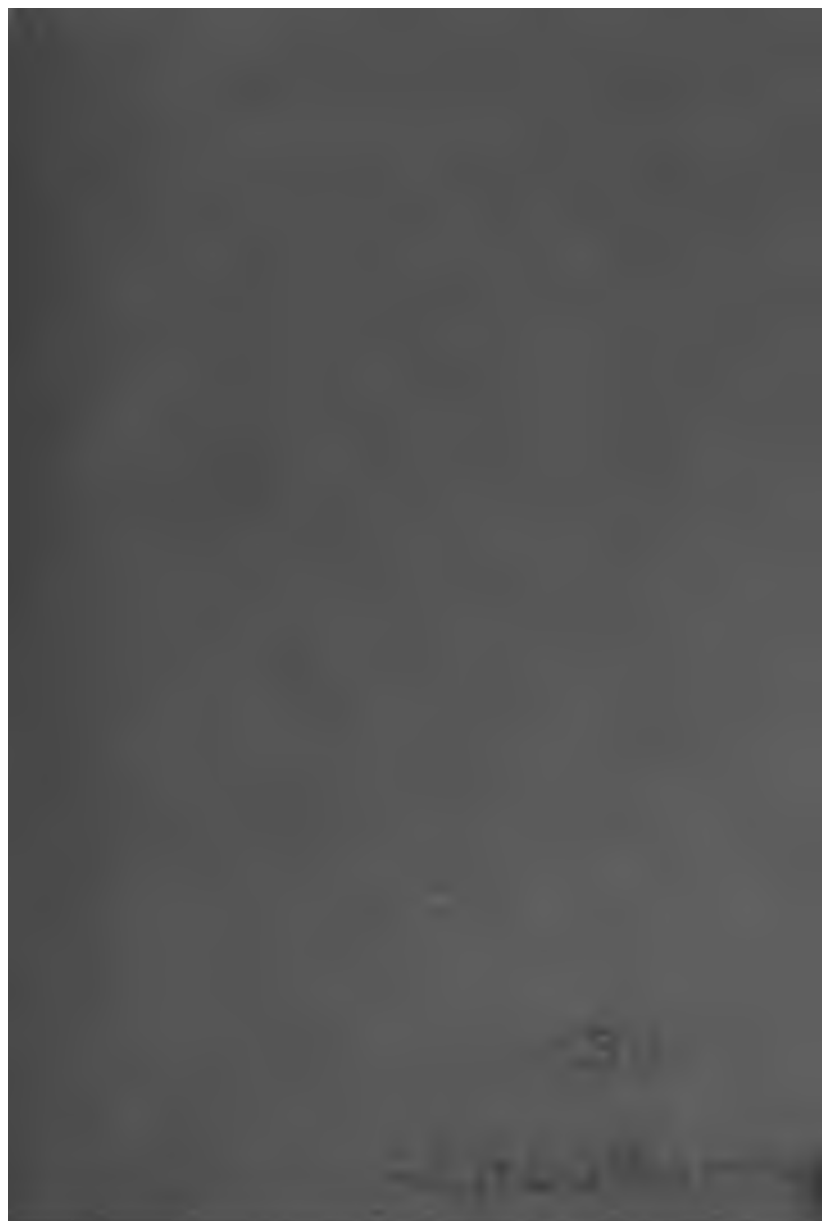
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A dream and a

FORGETTING

BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE,

AUTHOR OF

"GARTH," "FORTUNE'S FOOL," "JOHN PARMELEE'S
CURSE," "THE AMERICAN PENMAN," ETC., ETC.

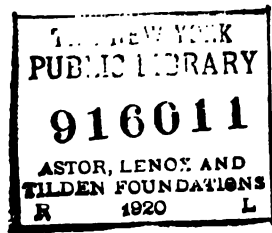
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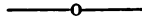


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A DREAM AND A FORGETTING.



CHAPTER I.

I KNEW well both the chief actors in this little drama; and that may be the reason why I think their story worth telling. Events are of small interest or significance compared with character; and I am free to confess that I have never succeeded in conveying to another the impressions of character that I receive. I may imagine I do it; my listener may fancy he apprehends it; but, when all is done, we discover that we have been thinking of different

things. For it is an aged truism that no one can see what does not lie within himself, or understand what he does not already know. It really does seem as if education, in the true sense of the word, were a matter less of the intellectual faculties than of the temperament and sympathies. But if that be the case, what is to become of our public-school system?

Fairfax Boardwine was educated, or at any rate he studied certain books, at the public school of his native town. This town was a place of three thousand inhabitants, within a hundred miles of New York. His father's profession was that of a farmer—which Emerson and other poets celebrate, but which, in this day and country, is not in all respects so alluring as tradition and theory make it. Intercourse with nature on the practical side seems to

be an obstacle to æsthetic communion with her. Old John Boardwine's talk was of crops and markets, never of the landscape, though his seventy acres formed part of a very charming one. He worked hard, and was, at one time, quite prosperous; but later he was outgeneraled by other farmers who were nearer New York. Then he contemplated selling out and moving. But the nearest he came to selling out was to raise a mortgage on his farm; and that was never paid off until years afterward, at his death, when half the farm (and the better half) was sold outright to a speculator in artificial incubation and mushrooms, who made a fortune.

The Boardwines came of good old English stock. In the colonial days they were a "genteel" family; they fought honorably in the Revolution, when that came along;

and John's brother Philip was killed in our Civil War. Philip was a more capable and wide-awake man than John, and his loss (the two brothers had run the farm together) had a bad effect. Things went slowly down hill. There was not money enough to send Fairfax to college in what Fairfax considered proper style, so he would not go at all—and therein, I think, he made a serious mistake; for if college training and associations benefit anybody, it is just such clever self-confident fellows as Fairfax Boardwine. But he said that if he could not occupy the position of a gentleman among gentlemen, the only dignified course was to withhold his presence altogether, or words to that effect; an argument that had one manifest defect at least, namely, that the college could never know what it had lost. This incident ever

afterward supplied Fairfax with a grievance. I never could determine whether his quarrel was with his father for not creating an income for him out of empty air, or with the college for not dispensing with fees in his case, in consideration of the honor of instructing him. Meanwhile, his grievance was undoubtedly a great consolation to him.

At the age of seventeen, he had already begun to write verses. They were for the most part either erotic or philosophical. Some of them, which he showed me long afterward (I did not make his acquaintance until he was over twenty) were quite good. I recollect one which described, in more or less figurative language, how the writer had fallen in love with a young lady of sumptuous attributes, who had afterward

been faithless to him. Thereupon he fell into wayward courses:

“Dark shadows gathered round me, more and more;
 The downward pathway, which I blindly trod,
 Seemed leading me away from all things pure—
 From confidence in man, and trust in God.”

This state of things, however, was destined to undergo a beneficent change. In the course of his downward career he met another young lady, whose character and influence upon him are shadowed forth as follows:

“Yet, ere the light quite vanished from my eyes,
 I saw beside the path a snow-white flower,
 Which smiled upon me in such heavenly wise
 That my heart throbbed, responsive to its power.
 But, when I strove to pluck that flower so fair,
 Dark memories of the Past rolled in between—
 I stood fast-bound with icy fetters there—
 The dreary chains of love that once had been!”

I liked that; and also the concluding

verse, which portrays the last state of the forlorn love, and which has a certain pathetic simplicity:

“ And now, upon the lonely hills I stand,
 Lonely, but calm, waiting for sunrise hour;
 And, gazing upward to the Heavenly Land,
 Methinks I catch the radiance of my flower.
 For God is just, and, sometime, I shall find
 In that fair World where, only, peace doth dwell,
 The recompense for sorrows left behind—
 The snow-white Flower that I loved so well!”

Had I been the editor of the local newspaper, I think I should have been willing to insert verses of this stamp; they showed good taste and correct sentiment. At the same time, they seem a little thin-blooded for a boy of seventeen. A larger infusion of tropical luxuriance would have been less satisfactory for the present, but more promising for the future. A great nature is more torrid and headlong than that, in

its opening manifestations. Doubtless, on the other hand, a successful poet can dispense with a great nature; indeed, a great nature is, nowadays, rather a poor commodity to go to market with. So that, upon the whole, judging from these earlier productions of his, I would rather have been a publisher to contract with Fairfax for the publication of his forthcoming works, than a friend or a mistress, to intrust my heart and honor to his keeping. I should have expected to find him endowed with a cold, intellectual imagination—the imagination which enters into all things experimentally and speculatively, but is careful not to compromise its possessor.

As a matter of fact, however, I made Fairfax's personal acquaintance before I read anything that he had written, and I

was thereby led to conclusions different from those above indicated. For he was a man who could not fail to impress those who came in contact with him. He had a robust and powerful physique, a big square head covered with a shaggy profusion of dark hair, and a square, somewhat harsh-featured face, with large, dark-gray eyes, set rather near together. His manner was preoccupied and taciturn, and strangers thought him repellent and unsympathetic; but I fancy this was largely due to a sort of shyness, by no means incompatible with large self-esteem. When he was at ease in the company of his intimates, and his interest was aroused by some topic that appealed to him, he became quite another creature—his eyes sparkled, his cheeks reddened, he shoved his hands about in his hair until it stood up in thick tangles,

and he talked freely and often impetuously and brilliantly. He expressed his opinions strongly; I sometimes doubted whether he held them as strongly as he expressed them. It was easier for him to make you believe in him than to believe in himself. Many of his dogmas were in a high degree radical and unconventional; but his actual practice was generally civilized enough. In the same way, he could probably have thrashed nineteen men out of twenty of his own weight; but I never heard of his having engaged in any personal conflict.

He was a man whom no woman would fail to notice at first sight; but most of them soon gave him up on one ground or another. He was not proficient in small talk; nor had he the impurable self-possession, and the politely caressing ways, that enable a man to succeed with women.

They called him bearish, conceited, and disagreeable. And in truth, though in congenial surroundings he was graceful and well-poised in his bodily movements, I have seen him become physically awkward and clumsy in the presence of a roomful of lively girls; and his conversation, instead of being magnetic and original, would become absurdly conventional, frigid and laconic. He used to explain this by saying that women were nuisances, and that it was no use taking the trouble to make one's self agreeable to them. But I am inclined to doubt this. I think he would have given a great deal to be a favorite with women, as so many men of much smaller calibre were. But his intense self-consciousness demanded that, in order to expand and rejoice, he should be warmed and moved by cordial liking and respectful admiration.

He could have devoted himself to almost any woman whom he had reason to think was in love with him. At the same time he was unable to take the first steps toward establishing this desirable state of things. If the woman made the advances then Fairfax was all right; he would go quite as far with her as prudence allowed, and perhaps further. It did not seem to make much difference to him whether the woman were, in herself, especially attractive; it was an unfailing attraction that she found him attractive. But even so, he could not manage two women at once—I mean in the same room, for instance. Privacy and a certain amount of secrecy were essential to his full comfort. On the other hand, it is quite conceivable that he might have had tender relations with more than one woman at the same time, pro-

.

vided he could keep them physically apart, and ignorant of one another. Men of large intellect and diversified moods often seem able to maintain a sort of sentimental harem, so to speak, and apply women like medicines or tonics, one for one mood, another for another. It is superfluous to remark that such a practice is open to the most condign reprobation. But the sex is sometimes avenged by one of their number, who fascinates and dominates the inconstant male reprobate, body and soul, and then throws him aside, a spectacle of ridicule and contempt for gods and men.

Now I do not mean to assert that Fairfax Boardwine maintained a harem of this transcendental description, because I know nothing about it. I only submit that he might have done so without contradicting what I assume to have been his character.

For although he was aggressively frank and outspoken about many things, he was in some other respects fantastically and almost morbidly mysterious and secretive. There was often no apparent reason in these privacies. What he concealed might just as well have been made known; and, again, not a few things that he made known would better have been concealed. It was a trait of temperament, analogous to the magpie's passion for stealing spoons. It may sound odd to charge a great formidable fellow like Fairfax with being sly; but I know not how else to name the quality I am trying to describe. It was generated partly by sensitiveness, I suppose, and partly by an intellectual pleasure in mystifications—a development of the proverbial Yankee shrewdness. In a larger sphere of activity it might have disap-

peared, or at any rate assumed a healthier and less disproportionate position.

But I must leave these speculations and tell, not what Fairfax Boardwine may have been, but what he actually did; and first of all, about the woman he fell in love with, and who loved him. For, however ambiguous his flirtations may have been, everybody knew when he was finally caught—there was nothing ambiguous about that. Some said that he had got something very much in excess of his deserts; others declared that he had made the mistake of his life. For my own part, I considered Mary Gault to be about the finest and most nearly unique creature I had ever happened to meet. She was a powerful argument in favor of a direct Divine creation; for it would have taxed the most elastic doctrine of heredity to account for her genesis and existence.

CHAPTER II.

MARY GAULT was born in an adjoining town, and her parents, for all that ever appeared, were very commonplace people. Her mother, whom I once saw, looked like an elderly housemaid—a benevolent, religious, industrious woman, with hard, ugly hands, and a neat white cap and apron. Mary had a sister, also commonplace, who married a small tradesman; and, I believe, a brother, who was a clerk in a retail dry-goods shop. The mother had rheumatism and dyspepsia, and was not likely to last long. She was prematurely aged, like most American women of her station and constitution.

Such being the conditions, how to account for Mary? She was like a great fragrant rose, springing out of the base loam of a garden. The noisiest person was made quiet by her appearance; her presence brought some pure thoughts to the most debased; the sight of her was consolation to the afflicted. She was possessed of unusual intelligence and a strong character; she had plenty of delicate maidenly pride, in the general sense; but as regarded her personal claims, no one could have evinced a sweeter humility and self-effacement than she. This unconsciousness of herself rendered her beauty—which otherwise would have been her most conspicuous quality—an almost foregone conclusion from the loveliness of her nature; you noticed it only as the physical adjunct or correspondence of the prior and higher spiritual charm.

What better thing can be said of a beautiful woman than that she makes you forget her beauty? Yet this was true of Mary Gault.

Had she been a woman of genius, it would have been easier to understand. But genius—that strange, obscure, unaccountable fascination—was not at all in her way. She was as natural and transparent as daylight. If she had a mystery, it was not that of an exquisite work of art, but of a simple flower. Her brown eyes were so clear and sincere, that it was only their kindness that prevented their glance being embarrassing. But Mary Gault had what is, for some reason, rare in women—warm, human charity. Not the deliberate charity that comes from religious obligation: but that sympathetic, spontaneous good-will and kindly construction which emboldens a man to think the better of himself, without first postulating

the depravity of human nature in general. One felt that he might confess a sin to this pure young woman, and receive absolution; though the plight of him who should have lied to her or deceived her would not be enviable. She had some of the companionable and substantial qualities of the best kind of men; but these made her only the more feminine.

Nothing else gave me so high an opinion of Fairfax Boardwine as his venturing to fall in love with a girl like Mary Gault. It more advanced him in my estimation than if he had been the author of Shakespeare's sonnets or of "Paradise Lost." That she should love him was less surprising; she could only love what was beneath her, for there was nothing human above her. Besides, the man whom she had endowed with herself must by that very fact become emi-

nent and incomparable. Nevertheless, I used to watch him pretty sharply to find out whether he appreciated her. I am bound to admit that he seemed to. It was fine to see them together; one believed then in matches made in heaven. There was a royal passion in her blood; and she kindled him into a splendor that transfigured him. There must, after all, have been a great deal of good in him; he was in the first flush of young manhood; everything was still possible to him. So far as intellect can keep pace with heart, he kept pace with her. But the intellect falters and changes; the heart is constant and lasts.

The occasion of their meeting was her appointment to fill a vacancy in the school. For she, who might have filled the loftiest throne in the world, was an excellent school-teacher, and commanded a salary of eight

hundred dollars a year. What an experience to have had her instruct one in arithmetic and geography! There were some overgrown, unruly boys in one of her classes; and upon a certain occasion she took the ringleader of these by the collar of his jacket, and cast the poor insubordinate imbecile out of doors. It would be interesting to know the future career of that fellow. Did he wither up from the face of the earth? or did he become a good and useful citizen? I am sure no ordinary fate could have overtaken him.

I dislike to meddle with superlatives, and I perceive that I am only making Mary Gault seem unreal and fabulous; though she was the most genuine and wholesome creature of flesh and blood that ever breathed, ate, spoke, and laughed. Therefore I shall attempt no more feeble portraiture, but take hold of facts and events,

Fairfax naturally did not want a long engagement; and Mary said "Just give me time to realize what is to be, and then, the sooner I'm yours the better." And as if to smooth the way for them, a relative of Mary's died precisely at that juncture, and left her a legacy of ten thousand dollars. Ninty-nine people out of a hundred marry on less. In addition, Mary had her salary as teacher, and Fairfax had his farm, which supported him, at any rate.

Hereupon Fairfax deciaared that he would not marry until he could match Mary's ten thousand dollars with a like sum of his own begetting. Mary looked at him with interest, and asked, "Why?"

"I can't live on your money," he replied. "You give me yourself; I must give you everything else. Your legacy was left you to spend on yourself, not on me,"

"I want to spend it on myself; I want to get myself married to you."

"It won't do. You don't know the world. People would say I took advantage of you."

"But I should not say so; and it is me that you love."

Fairfax shook his shaggy head. "And that isn't all," he said. "We couldn't live on the interest of ten thousand dollars."

"Why, yes, we could, darling. The income at six per cent. would be six hundred; my salary is eight—that makes fourteen hundred—and, living at your farm, we shouldn't need to spend half of it."

"But we are not going to live on my farm; and I can't let you go on teaching school." Again Mary fixed her lovely eyes on him, and her cheeks flushed a little. "What are we going to do, then?" she asked, at length.

“We must live in New York,” replied Fairfax, with energy. “Your life and mine are both wasted in a place like this, and would be still more wasted when we are made one. Mary, I shouldn’t have asked you to marry me if I had not resolved to be eminent in the world. I mean you to be the wife of a great man. I will make you a great lady, as you are already a great woman. My name has always been an honorable one, but I will make it famous. Do you know how?”

“Of course I don’t!” said she, laughing. Her laugh, delicious to hear in itself, was not expected by Fairfax at that moment, and seemed to disconcert him a little. She perceived it, and remarked, by way of explanation, “You make me feel as if I were acting in a play!” The truth was, she was so natural, that anything in the least artificial amused when it did not annoy her.

"Real life is like a play sometimes," Fairfax rejoined, reassured by the sweet effluence of her love for him, which emanated like a perfume from her looks and tones. "Well," he went on, looking down, and pushing his hand through his hair, "I haven't said anything about this to you before, because I didn't wish you to care for anything in me but what you would see for yourself. Have you ever seen anything that I have written?"

"Yes; those little poems that the paper prints sometimes."

"What did you think of them?"

"I liked them very much; they are just what I should expect you to write. You could do anything well. But what has that to do with— Oh!" she broke off, with a sudden, bright look, "are you going to become a great poet?—famous in that way?"

"Do you think that is impossible?" he replied, slowly, and falling into an abstraction.

She was silent a little while. "It is a great thing to hope for," she said at length, in a low serious tone. "You ought to know better than I; you have been thinking of it longer. It seems to me—I believe you could be a great poet, Fairfax!"

"I believe so too," he returned.

"But you must be a great poet—a really great one!" she continued, with an almost solemn earnestness. "You must not make a mistake about it; to be only a pretty good poet would be worse than nothing—for you!" In these words she showed a deep knowledge of his character—deeper, perhaps, than she herself realized then.

"While you believe in me I can be great," answered he. "I have had this

purpose ever since I was a boy; but until I met you I did not feel sure of myself. But you have all that I have not; you are the key-stone of my arch. Besides, without you I should not have cared enough for greatness to have won it. But now that it is to be my wedding-present to my wife I feel no doubt. Shall you love me more?"

"I love you. I don't know yet whether I can love a great poet. He will seem like another person for a time."

"Don't learn to love him better than me or I shall be jealous!"

All at once, as their glances met, tears welled into Mary's eyes, and she put her arms round her lover's neck, and laid her head on his shoulder.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed he, kissing her. But it was some time before she made any answer.

At last she wiped the tears from her cheeks, and smiled. "It just came over me," she said, "that the great poet would never love me as you would. But that's nonsense! Tell me what you mean to do first."

"I have written enough to make a book," returned Fairfax, "and I'm going to New York to see the publishers about it. But first, I want you to read it."

CHAPTER III.

THE book which Fairfax had compiled from his poems had been one of his secrets; he had amused himself by not saying anything about it to anyone until the moment when, by way of dramatic climax to their conversation, he revealed its existence to Mary Gault. Mary did not cry out, or clap her hands; she received the news with composure. Her's was not a dramatic character; she was as full of repose and order as the evening star. Fairfax was a trifle put out. He had not the simplicity to perceive that, since she loved him, no achievement

of his, however magnificent, would surprise her. It was a matter of course that he should perform fabulous exploits. Fairfax was self-conceited, as we know; but, for honest and unfaltering belief in his own great qualities, he could not, if the truth were known, rival Mary Gault. Belief, as he understood it, was speculative assertion; but for her it had the sincerity of day and night. Her nature was elemental—woven of broad, clear strands; his was a complex tangle of disordered threads, brightened here and there, however, with the golden gleam of genius.

He gave her the manuscript, and she read it then and there, while he forged restlessly about the room, or sat by the window, out of her range of vision, covertly watching her to see how she was impressed by it. She read on, without uttering a word and

with scarcely a change of position, for a couple of hours or more; then she folded up the leaves, placed the elastic band round them, and, holding the roll loosely in her lap, leaned back in her chair, and became silently meditative.

Fairfax rose brusquely and crossed the room. He took the manuscript from her and thrust it rather haughtily in his pocket. "You don't seem much stirred up," he remarked, with wounded vanity.

"I like some of it very well," Mary replied, looking up with a slight smile. "But in some places you don't write like yourself. It sounds like repeating something you had learned by rote, instead of your own thoughts. I would rather have it all your own."

"It is a poet's business to enter into other people's feelings and interpret them,"

said he, dogmatically. "You wouldn't have me write nothing but autobiography, would you?"

But Mary was not to be misled by such sophistries.

"It is the manner of the writing, more than the subjects. To sympathize with a person is not the same as to imitate him. I would rather have you say a good thing like yourself than a better thing like somebody else. Tennyson does not write like Browning, nor Browning like Swinburne. Whether they succeed or fail, they do it in their own way."

"So you think my poems are imitations of Swinburne and Tennyson and Browning, do you? I have no voice of my own?"

"You have a voice of your own, darling," she replied, with emphasis, "and you ought never to speak in any other. This poem,

for instance, on 'Men as Trees,' is all yours, and I like it best of all. There you say what nobody but you can say, just as nobody looks or thinks like you—when you are yourself. But the one called 'The Tower of Hospitality,' though it is beautiful, is like Tennyson. The words are yours, but the mind and voice are his. It will not help you to be known; people who read it will think of Tennyson, not of you. But I want them to think of you only."

The common-sense of this latter argument struck Fairfax, in spite of himself. Beyond a doubt, he could never advance his own interests by reminding his readers (however successfully and poetically) of somebody else. Moreover, he could not help acknowledging, in the depths of his own self-consciousness, that Mary was entirely right in her critical comparison of

“Men as Trees” with “The Tower of Hospitality.” The one was genuine, and the other was not. But, on the other hand, they were both accomplished facts, and were both in themselves, very good verses; and he could not bring himself to pull the “Tower” down merely because it happened to be built according to another man’s architectural patent. It helped to give the book suitable dimensions, it had cost him much labor, and many readers would be sure to like it without reflecting that, but for Tennyson, it might never have been written. Besides, Fairfax did not like to accept corrections, even from Mary; perhaps from her least of all. It would establish an undesirable precedent. The wiser plan, he thought, would be to abstain from writing any more “Towers of Hospitality,” and quietly to expunge from it and similar

poems such passages as were especially obnoxious to Mary's criticism.

Meanwhile he said, "A first book is only a first book, after all. Once I get my foot in the stirrup, I will ride where I please. One good original poem, such as you consider 'Men as Trees' to be, is enough to start my reputation. Come, it's warm in the house; ~~let us~~ go out into the garden!"

It was a hot ~~May~~ day; torrid, but full of sap and freshness; not dry as in the heat of summer. Such days, in their budding and impetuous ardor, are like the pure but irresistible passion of a girl who has just awakened to the sweet meaning of love. The warm fragrance of the air is like her breath; the delicate verdure increases on the woodland as the rosy flush steals over her cheeks; the inner voice of new life and desire palpitates in the soft meadows as her

gentle but fiery heart throbs in her bosom; the mingled warbling of innumerable birds symbolizes the joyous yet tremulous song of her maiden soul. The sun burns tenderly through the vaporous blue above, as the lover parts the draperies of his love's bed, responding to her glowing invitation. Ah, the delicious fervor of that speechless embrace—speechless, but eloquent! The immortal potency and pregnancy of creation are exposed in these days of spring, and love and truth behold therein the example and warrant of their own being.

So Fairfax and Mary went forth into the garden, hand in hand. All lovely and fragrant things were approaching their consummation; but in that approach was something lovelier even than the consummation itself. The two lovers felt the inspiration of what surrounded them. Mary's

hand in his, by its pressure and its slight spontaneous movements, uttered an interior sympathy that magnetized and stimulated him. The subtle revelations that it communicated were mirrored and confirmed in her eyes and tones. To look at her and think that she was his made him sigh with a delicious yearning. They came to a grassy place, where they sat down in the shadow of a tall lilac-bush, whose opening blossoms made the air a perfume. He rested his shaggy head on her lap, and looked up to her, and saw the swell of her breast, and above it the white smoothness of her throat and chin. Her fingers crept through his hair and caressed his brown cheek. He wondered whether her thoughts were like his own. In a moment she bent forward and downward slowly, with the luxurious leisure of entire and intimate

love. Downward came her noble face from heaven, bringing heaven with it. Her mouth touched his; she kissed him as Diana kissed Endymion; and he, like Endymion, was well-nigh too much overcome with languor of felicity to return her kiss. There are secrets in lovers' kisses that can never be revealed. Beneath the languor that soothed his nerves, Fairfax felt a sovereign vigor rejoicing in his blood. "This is life; this is life!" he murmured, against her lips. He felt her smile; she was too near for him to see it. Too near—but she could never be near enough! Suddenly he thought of his poems, and they seemed, in the light of this royal communion, unspeakably squalid, inadequate, and lifeless. The applause of the world, could he win it—was it worth one whisper of her voice, saying "I love you?" And who but a fool

would postpone the consummation of love till the world had bestowed its paltry crown? At that wise and sweet moment Fairfax recognized his error and condemned it. He raised himself on one arm and looked at her with passionate intentness.

“Mary,” said he, “let us be married at once—next week—to-morrow! How do we know what might happen? To live one day as man and wife would be better than to live a lifetime apart. Nothing but love is worth living for! What do we care for anything in comparison with each other? Let us be married, and stay here till we die, and afterward be together in heaven. There is nothing in the world worth having or thinking of but you!”

This speech was probably the most sensible that Fairfax ever uttered. But, like

so many other good things in this world, it came too late. Mary had already made up her mind to the other alternative, and she was too strong to change. She felt the force of the appeal quite as much, perhaps, as did he who made it; but it was not many moments before she answered "What would become of your poetry, and of your fame?"

"I give them all up!" answered he, with a sweeping gesture of his arm.

"No, you shall not!" said Mary. "You shall have me—if you want me—and the rest, too! Whatever right I have to you, I have none to your genius. That belongs neither to you nor to me; we must help each other to take care of it. I don't mean that I can help you in your work," she added, with a little laugh. "I am only a matter-of-fact girl; but I won't stand in the

way of it. You mustn't imagine that I would have it otherwise."

"I can never write the poem that I have felt to-day," said Fairfax, shaking his head, with a sigh. But he tacitly accepted her decision, and they returned to the house.

Fairfax now made his preparations for descending upon New York with his manuscript. At this stage of the proceedings he paid me the compliment of consulting me as to the best method of procedure. I told him what little I knew about the nature and habits of publishers, and gave him two or three letters of introduction. He had not sought my opinion of his book, and I could only judge of its probable merit by such stray specimens as I had met with from time to time; my expectation was that he would make a better début than most beginners, but that the really valu-

able and original features of this work would not win immediate recognition. These features were present, and they could be discerned by an eye prepared to look for them; but they were not expressed with force and breadth enough to arouse and rivet general attention. The poems most likely to catch the public favor were those which showed the influence of other writers. I fancy Fairfax, in spite of his independent professions, really trusted more to the borrowed plumes than to his own. Could he have combined Mary's courage and singleness of purpose with his own talents the prospect would have been more reassuring.

It also occurred to me, as regarded the publishers, that if Mary could accompany him in his calls upon them, and do the talking and negotiating for him, it would

more redound to his advantage than all the letters of introduction that could be written. But this was not to be thought of, for practical reasons. She could not be his companion in New York for three or four days without a chaperon, and no chaperon was obtainable.

He started on his journey alone, therefore, and after various experiences, concerning the details of which he was always somewhat reticent, so far as I was concerned, he came back, having succeeded in disposing of his manuscript on a basis of ten per cent. royalty. He did not appear to be overmuch gratified at this result; probably he had anticipated receiving an advance of a thousand dollars or so. I pointed out to him, however, that the expenses of a first book of poems were generally defrayed out of the poet's own

pocket; and he would find it much more satisfactory in the end to receive his emoluments as they came due, than to leave the book to "work them off," a process which generally resulted in an ineffaceable debt.

The book was brought out immediately, to catch the summer market. The reviews were neither numerous nor enthusiastic; but they were fairly cordial, and spoke amiably of the "promise of better things." Three or four hundred copies were sold; and Fairfax pasted all the press notices in a scrap-book, and assumed the demeanor of Neglected Genius.

CHAPTER IV.

DISPASSIONATELY viewed, there was really nothing in the episode to call for Byronic wrath; but it pleased Fairfax to behave Byronically, and there was no help for it. I have already intimated that he enjoyed a grievance; and he certainly exploited this for all it was worth. Nor was he, perhaps, to be blamed for such behavior; who has a better right to be sensitive than a young poet? But the objectionable feature of his conduct was his attitude toward Mary Gault. There was no excuse for finding fault with her; but he did so, notwithstanding.

As a matter of course, she got all the reviews and read them with quite as much attention as the current American review is worth. She observed that they sometimes failed to notice the best things in the poems, or to give proper weight to them when they did; but she remarked that their sins were chiefly those of omission, and that such statements or judgments as were positively put forward were in the main complimentary. As for the dearth of popular recognition, that disturbed her little. She could make allowances; the finest things were seldom those that received the quickest and widest appreciation. In a word, she was philosophical about it, and would not admit that, all things considered, there was any ground to be either angry or discouraged. Fairfax regarded—or professed to regard—this as a lack of loyalty

in her toward himself. He wanted her to curse all critics and criticism, for his sake, with a comprehensive anathema, and, as she did not do it, he was sulky and indignant. The truth was, he resented not only the critics' want of enthusiasm about what he had done, but also, and probably even more, their failure to applaud what he had intended to do. There is no arguing with such a state of mind as this; and no one but a fool could abet it. Mary was anything but a fool, though she loved Fairfax with her whole heart. She devoutly desired his success, and was determined that nothing should be left undone to secure it; but, meanwhile, there was nothing to be gained by losing one's temper. Fairfax placed his vanity before his soul; Mary cared for his soul supremely; and this was one ground of their, or rather his, quarrel.

But there was another and, if possible, a still more absurd one. Fairfax maintained that he would have fared better with his book if Mary had forborne her criticisms of it while yet in the manuscript state. He had, as he now perforce admitted, followed her suggestions wherever practicable, with the result (as he had the face to assert) of "spoiling" the exquisite creations which would otherwise have been perfect. Out of regard for her he had acted against his better judgment—his poetic intuition—and hence his reverse! Mary made not the least defence against this preposterous charge. She did not reply, as she might well have done, that Fairfax would never have alluded to the alterations if his book had met with better success. Nor did she call his attention to the fact that her counsel had been, not to alter the poems in

question, but to expunge them altogether. On the contrary, she received his complaint not merely with good humor, but with eagerness; she seemed anxious to adopt any pretext for believing that she, and not he, might be to blame for the disappointment. It is characteristic of the best women that they will hoodwink and violate their consciences for the sake of the man they love, and for nothing else under the sun.

What with his vanity, his sulkiness, his secret self-distrust, and a certain indolence which often accompanies exceptional talent, it is quite possible that Fairfax might have subsided at this point, and never again attempted to be the poet of the age. But Mary would not hear of anything like surrender. She was resolute that he should try again, and promised him that, this time,

his reward would equal his desert. So entirely preoccupied was she with the matter, that anyone would have supposed that it was she, and not he, who was excogitating the new poem. And, indeed, something similar to this may have been the case. She so far identified her hopes, her sympathies, and her desires with his—or with what ought to have been his—that she became for the time being a sort of feminine idealization of the man himself; an idealization, that is to say, of his higher emotional and intellectual qualities. It was a singular and beautiful condition, attainable only by generous souls who love, at some critical period of their passion. The results to which it sometimes leads are scarcely credible, save to those whose experience furnishes them with a parallel. But the miracles of love can hardly be exaggerated.

There is, however, no miracle to be recorded in the present instance. Mary Gault did not by sympathy write a poem or become a genius. But a somewhat remarkable thing did, nevertheless, befall her.

One evening in August, Fairfax and she took a walk, as was their custom. Fairfax was in a very depressed frame of mind. He had been, for a week past, at work upon a poem, but had failed to write anything that suited him. He had brought with him the fragment which he had written, and he showed it to Mary. She read it, and was obliged to agree that it would not do. It showed too plainly the effect of discouragement and demoralization. For the first time, Mary's confidence was a little dashed. The misgiving occurred to her—what if, after all Fairfax's capacity

had finally deserted him, and he was never to write worthily again?

He noticed her dejection, and broke out in murmurs and repinings.

“Why was I not born an idiot?” he said; “it would have been better than to have brains and be able to make no use of them. I was destined to be miserable, and to make others so. Why did you ever care for me? If you know your own interest, you will leave me and forget me. Since I cannot be what I wish, I shall be nothing, and worse than nothing. I wish I were dead; and you will live to wish I had never been born!”

“My darling,” she said, “I would die to give you what you want!”

“Neither you nor anyone can help me,” he replied. “I am good for nothing, and the sooner that is recognized, the better. I

have no hope and no ambition. The best thing I can do is to go to the devil, where such failures as I belong!"

This language was not only brutal, but insincere. Fairfax was in no such abject despair as he pretended. He felt angry and soured, and he scolded in his anger like a spoiled child. He found a certain malevolent satisfaction in making Mary the victim of his bad temper. He knew that she supposed him to be in earnest, and it consoled him to make her heart ache. It was contemptible conduct, but three men out of five in the world have been, at some time, guilty of the like.

"I sometimes think," said Mary, in answer to his last outburst, "that you have done less well since you knew me than you did before. And I am afraid that I cannot give you anything that will make up the,


loss to you. If that is so, I must wish we had never met."

"So you give me up, do you?" said Fairfax, persisting in his rôle, and wilfully misunderstanding her.

"If it were in my power to give you what you want, in exchange for myself, I would do it," was her answer, spoken at who knows what cost to her heart and her pride.

"Oh, I'm not worth troubling about!" he returned; and there the conversation, so far as it related to the matter in hand, terminated.

But it entered into the pure depths of Mary's soul, and was with her when she retired that night to her chamber. She lay for a long time awake, meditating upon his need, and praying, perhaps, as such women pray, for the power to help him. At last

she fell asleep; and in her sleep she was visited by a vivid and consistent dream, which remained distinctly in her memory when she awoke in the morning. And so much was she impressed by it, as being a thing specially sent to her in response to her passionate desire, that she sat down at her table and, before leaving her room, wrote out  story of her dream in full. The title she gave the story was the same as that which I have given to this narrative "A Dream and a Forgetting."

When, later in the day, she met Fairfax, she wore a serene and smiling countenance, and answered all his moody utterances with a light-hearted cheerfulness. He was at first provoked, but finally conquered, by this unexplained gayety; neither he nor any other man could long have resisted the lovely contagion of Mary's brighter moods,

He began to feel in good spirits, in spite of himself ; by the subtle potency of her feminine magic she lifted him out of his slough, and made him feel and express happiness. The torrid summer sun sank in the west, portentously large and glowing red, with swaths of golden and vermillion mist. The grasshoppers sang their thin, keen song; the swallows, already meditating departure, sat in long rows on the fence-rails and along the telegraph wire that bordered the New York railroad. The grain was ripe in the fields, and the yellow plumes of the golden-rod made a mellow glory in the pastures. It was a day of opulent content and fulfilment, when the mind dreams and reposes. The young man and woman sauntered through the fields side by side, her shoulder sometimes touching his, his downward glance sometimes turning to

meet hers. They talked of indifferent matters, called each other's attention to features of the landscape, laughed at some chance allusion, or asked each other the trifling questions that, between lovers, mean so much. But there was a depth in Mary's eyes that rendered them more than ordinarily beautiful, and a richness in the tones of her voice that indicated some unusual emotion. The day was to her a day of fate; such was her fancy, and, in after times, she looked back upon it and remembered its little incidents. She could have given no reason for this feeling that a logician would have accepted. But the human soul, in some moods, perceives the approach of events or conditions invisible to ordinary induction. Mary imagined that this was to be her last hour of unalloyed peace and happiness; and yet it was by her

own deliberate act that the change was to be wrought.

She put it off until the latest moment. Then, as they stood before the door of her home to say good-night, she took a folded paper out of her bosom. She had kept it there, instead of in her pocket, for some instinctive feminine reason which women will comprehend more readily than men.

"This is for you," she said, giving it to him. "It came to me last night, when I was wishing I could do something. I did not make it up—it came to me! Perhaps it will help you to what you want; I hope it will. It would not have come to me if I had not loved you; if you find it worth anything, that will be the reason."

"What is it?" he said, opening it and trying to read it in the dusky twilight. "A letter, or a story, or what?"

"You will know when you get home—you cannot see now," she replied. "I wanted you to read it first when you are alone, and a night must pass before you can speak to me about it. If it is of no use you need not mind letting me know. I don't feel as if it were my own, you know, so I am not sensitive. If it is the right thing, I shall be glad, though I sha'n't be able to take the credit to myself. It's just a dream, dear," she added, in a slightly tremulous voice; "but I have always believed that good spirits sometimes come to us in our dreams and bring us good thoughts."

When Fairfax got home he examined the mysterious paper with considerable curiosity. It related, in very simple but effective language, the series of episodes which Mary had dreamt. Nothing could be

more unpretending than the style of its presentation; and, at first, Fairfax thought that it contained little that could be of value to him. But he read it again and fell into a meditation. The story harmonized singularly with his own habit of thought; the design, the sentiment, and the moral suited the bent and structure of his mind. He began to regard it creatively—to feel stimulated by it. He saw the persons and events in living colors, and perceived the meanings that lay behind them. They assumed artistic form and symmetry. The longer he dwelt upon the matter, the less it affected him as something communicated from an extraneous source, and the more as if it were generated by his own brain. He was convinced, at all events, that, had it been generated by his own brain, it would have been thus and not otherwise.

It belonged to him by nature, if not by origin.

He rose from his chair and began to walk about his room, his lips moving and his eyes sparkling. The room was too small and close; he opened the door and went out, hatless, into the open air. The moon was up, and the landscape lay ghostly and beautiful beneath its light. He walked onward, swinging his arms and inhaling long breaths of pure air. Sometimes he would pause and for several minutes remain almost motionless; then he would resume his journey, indifferent or unconscious whither he went. Sometimes he was in the woods; sometimes he rustled his way through fields of corn; sometimes he climbed fences or leaped a wandering rivulet. His heart beat triumphantly; a sort of tumultuous repose possessed him.

He felt in himself the power to subdue the world. He was inspired as he had never before been, as he had not believed it possible to be inspired. It was midnight, but he was awake in every faculty; fatigue and drowsiness were annihilated. He felt as if he could walk forever and live forever.

Presently he found himself again approaching the village. His way led him past the house in which Mary lived. He was walking more rapidly now, for he wished to be at home and at work. The moonlight fell upon the front of Mary's house; there were no lights in the windows. The road upon which it faced was heavily shaded by chestnut trees, and Fairfax trod noiselessly along in the soft grass beneath them. As he approached, he glanced up at her chamber window, and saw that it was open; and even then she

appeared at it, and gazed out at the moon. She was in her day dress; evidently she had not slept. Beautiful she looked as she stood there, unconscious of his presence—a noble, calm face; a grand, reposeful figure. Fairfax's first impulse was to come forward and speak to her; but his second thought, more in accord with his secretive character, was to conceal himself beneath one of the trees by the roadside and observe her unawares. Moreover, her sudden apparition jarred upon him. It forced him to recall the fact that she had furnished the source and subject of his inspiration—she, and not himself. The reflection was an unwelcome one. It was in vain that he told himself that, without his genius to develop it, her dream would have availed nothing. Nor could he find consolation in the thought that it was a dream,

and not a conscious and voluntary production of her mind. Sophisticate the matter how he might, the truth remained that he would owe what promised to be the highest achievement of his life to another, and though that other was Mary Gault, he resented the obligation. But the only escape from the obligation was to forbear to write the poem; and for such a sacrifice he was in nowise prepared.

Several minutes passed away—minutes which, rightly employed, might have given a different complexion to the after lives of both of them. Then Mary turned away from the window and disappeared, and Fairfax, continuing his walk, soon arrived at his own house.

He had not returned for the purpose of going to bed, however. His brain was throbbing with ideas that demanded ex-

pression, and he rapidly got out his pen and paper and sat down at his table. He had never before felt so eager to write, nor had he ever written so readily and well. Hour after hour went by, and the summer dawn put out the light of his oil-lamp, but still he kept at his work. It was only after the sun had risen, and flung a ray across his paper, that he leaned back in his chair and threw down his pen. His face was pale, but his eyes were still bright; and as he gathered up the sheets of paper and read them over, he nodded his head approvingly. He had made a good beginning; he had written a noble exordium to the new poem, "A Dream and a Forgetting." And the whole future course of the poem was mapped out in his mind; it only needed putting on paper. He felt the assurance of success. His ambition was

about to be realized. He would be admitted among the great poets of the world.

He put his papers in his drawer and went to bed. He fell asleep and dreamed of his renown, while Mary Gault awoke from dreams of him.

CHAPTER V.

Fairfax wrote his great poem in a remarkably short time. I will not attempt to describe it: Those who have read it would not thank me for doing so, and the rest would gain no enlightenment worth having. It is enough to say that it portrayed the strength and weakness of love, and that its accessories were such as to bring it home to all readers. It was, and remains, one of the best of the longer American poems; its style is fresh and impressive, and the entire production is permeated with a splendid vitality. The episodes of love and

passion are as delicious as they are daring; the pathos is simple and exquisitely touching; and the tragic passages toward the end are heroic in their directness and power. I read the poem in manuscript, and could not but admit that Fairfax had surpassed my highest expectations. He had caught up the whole of love and uttered it. I was astonished at the insight and eloquence his work revealed. Where had he learned the truth and beauty that he here gave forth?

We had a symposium on the subject—Fairfax, Mary and myself. It was in October, and all the woods were crimson and gold, while the tall grass beside the brook was deep, vivid green, and red apples lay in heaps beneath the apple-trees in the orchard opposite. The king's barbaric, that Milton speaks of, never looked

upon a scene of such magnificence as this; nature had attired herself in robes of more gorgeous royalty than theirs. American autumn brings with it a sentiment of wealth and splendor that fulfils, but never satiates, the soul's instinctive love of such things; for it elevates that love from selfishness to unselfishness and endows it with the sweetness of infinity and immortality. Possibly, Fairfax interpreted the golden glory amidst which we sat as emblematic of the more practical opulence to which he now hoped to attain; but I am sure that Mary Gault saw in it nothing more than a symbol of the rich renown which should henceforth invest the name of the man she loved.

Fairfax, in a red flannel shirt, and trousers tucked into a pair of cowhide boots, sat hatless with his back against the

base of a walnut tree, with his manuscript in his hands. He was the type of the farmer poet—the peasant of genius—the American Burns; although, as a matter of fact, the farmer element was mainly confined to the costume. His massive and expressive face was illuminated with the genial light of approbation, and also with that of some nobler and purer emotion, reflected from the presence of the woman who had promised herself to him. And she sat near him, leaning on one arm, dressed in white muslin, with a crimson ribbon at her throat. Mary was always simple in her dress, and, I suppose, not fashionable; she probably made her gowns herself. But, if they were not fashionable, they became her, and were more or less peculiar to her, and characteristic. Fashion would have been detrimental to her, by ob-

scuring something of her individuality. I will not be so rash as to attempt to go into details on this subject; I will only say that Mary never seemed to be strangled or constricted by her clothes; without concealing the superb lines of her figure, they left her free to move in any way she liked; she could stand under an apple-tree and pluck the fruit growing over her head with perfect ease, and no less perfect unconsciousness that she was performing a feminine miracle. Nevertheless, it was easy to understand that in a New York drawing-room, or on Fifth avenue, Mary Gault would have presented a somewhat unconventional appearance. The leaders of fashion would have smiled. Fashion conquers by brute force of numbers; and Mary, though she outvalued a thousand ordinary women, was only one person after all, and

could not make other people sensible and beautiful simply by being so herself.

Well, we three were going over the poem; that is, Fairfax would read this or that passage, and Mary and I would comment upon it from our different standpoints. My criticisms were verbal ones mainly; but Mary, whenever she spoke, said something that touched the spirit and vital principle of the poem; it was creative criticism, and, like all of its class, proceeded more from the sympathy and insight of the heart than from the judicial and analytical faculties of the brain. She understood what the poet meant to say, and could tell, by dint of her love for him, how nearly he had succeeded in saying it. I fancy that her opinions about poetry written by a person who was indifferent to her, would not have been nearly so pregnant.

The poetry must have been good, if for no other reason, because it successfully withstood the test of such an afternoon as that. Most literature looks tawdry in the outdoor sunshine; but everything was in harmony that day. Fairfax even condescended to accept some of our suggestions. Afterward Mary uncovered a basket that she had with her, containing a dozen magnificent apples and a loaf of fine white bread. These we munched with measureless enjoyment and content; and meanwhile the subject of publishing the book was started.

My affairs obliged me to leave the village in a few days, and pass the winter in New York, and I offered to take the manuscript with me and make the best terms I could for it, on Fairfax's behalf. For, though by no means in destitute circum-

stances, I knew that my young friend had not so much spare cash but that a week in New York would make a perceptible hole in it; especially as he would wish to make a show of being as good as anybody, and would probably expend four times what he need have done, to no purpose. Moreover, there was reason to think that he was not the best conductor of his own business, being still somewhat to seek in familiarity with the ways of the municipal world—the publishing world more particularly. Fairfax acceded to my request, which, I explained, would involve little or no exertion on my part; and it only remained to settle the terms on which the bargain with the publisher was to be made.

Here, as I had anticipated, the poet required some persuasion.

“We are all of one opinion, about the

poem," he said, "and I suppose we may take it that the world will think as we do. The book will be published at a dollar and a half, and it is safe to expect a sale of ten thousand copies. That is fifteen thousand dollars; and ten per cent. of that is fifteen hundred. So I should think the publisher would be willing to advance a thousand dollars at least."

I glanced at Mary, and was encouraged by the expression of her face to say, "Byron and Tennyson made big fortunes out of poetry, and perhaps you will. But publishers never believe in a poet until after the critics and the public have led the way. I suppose you will admit that a poem like this of yours is not written every day?"

"Well, not quite every day," replied Fairfax, who was never much of a hand at taking himself humorously.

"No; and the rarer such a poem is, the less can you expect a publisher to believe in it beforehand. He will be quite as likely to believe in the existence of the sea-serpent, or the arrival of the Day of Judgment."

"But he won't have to believe in it beforehand. He will have the manuscript."

"Publishers don't read manuscripts, especially if all the lines begin with a capital letter. They hire people to do that for them."

"That amounts to the same thing."

"It amounts to very little. Only the higher order of minds (like Mary's and my own) have either the insight or the courage to know a really good thing when they see it. They are accustomed to mediocrity, and when they encounter anything excellent or unique, they at once distrust it and

themselves. The loftier your flight is, the more difficult will you find it to obtain the preliminary recognition. I will lay you odds that the man who brings out your poem, whoever he may be, will do so with the conviction that he will lose money on it.

"But suppose you tell him what you think of it yourself?"

"I could not do a more injudicious thing. Knowing that I am a friend of yours, he would at once assume that I was doing my best to bolster up a desperate business. If I told him that this was one of the best poems I ever read, nothing would persuade him that it was not one of the worst he was ever asked to publish. That is what he would call allowing a margin for exaggeration."

"What will you tell him then? That it

is the poorest trash you ever came across?" demanded Fairfax, with scorn.

"If I added that it was likely to sell well, it might influence him favorably. However, I don't intend to go as far as that. I shall keep my literary views on the matter in the background, and simply say that I believe it to be the sort of thing that people will like; and that I shouldn't be surprised if he managed to get rid of a couple of thousand copies or so. He will be able to put some faith in such a recommendation, because he will recall instances in which they have been verified. But if I began to talk in the 'Don Juan,' or 'Enoch Arden' vein, he would turn pale and show me the door."

"I always heard that publishers were fools," remarked Fairfax moodily, "but I had no idea their idiocy went so far as this."

"It seems to me that they are only like other business men," said Mary, with the good sense and courage and impartiality for which she was always so remarkable. "Their trade is to sell books for what they will bring, not to understand their literary merit. If they were to trust every author who said his book would make a fortune, they would all be ruined very soon. They must base their calculations on an average; and until you have established your reputation, they must treat you as no better than an average writer."

"Oh, you are always a pessimist!" said Fairfax; though she must have been an optimist of the most transcendent type when she consented to take up with so perverse and self-conceited a creature as he was. "However," he continued, "I dare say pessimism may be right for once

in a way; and at any rate, I shall have my revenge on them sooner or later. The only drawback to the percentage arrangement is, that our marriage will have to be put off till the spring. I had hoped that we should be able to make a visit to New York as man and wife this winter."

Upon this Mary bent upon him a grave and thoughtful look. Perhaps she was thinking that he seemed less annoyed at the postponement of their wedding than at the cause of it.

"Have you written any dedication for the book?" I inquired, *à propos* of this suggestion.

"Dedication? not I!" returned he, with an air as if he had yet to meet with a person worthy of such an honor.

"Shakespeare sets you a good example there," I said. "You may recollect that he

wrote a number of sonnets which have been favorably received by the world. He dedicated them to 'Mr. W. H.' as their 'only begetter.' Does that suggest anything to you?"

"I don't know that it does," replied Fairfax, haughtily.

Mary threw me a deprecating glance. But I was provoked.

"I would propose, then," I continued, that you make a similar dedication, only substituting the initials 'M. G.' for 'Mr. W. H.'"

"Oh, I understand!" said he. He turned to Mary. "So you want your share in the matter to be advertised, do you?"

"You are a brute to say such a thing," I exclaimed, sternly. "I would anticipate such an objection from Mary, but not from you. You can never repay her what you

owe her, either in this thing or in others. I am only surprised that you have been under her influence so long, and yet can remain the selfish curmudgeon that you are!"

The delivery of these remarks afforded me the sweetest satisfaction, and I got up, half hoping, I believe, that Fairfax would offer some physical demonstration of resentment. But (as I might have foreseen, had I not been angry) it turned out otherwise. Fairfax, after growling a little, suddenly became good-natured, and said that he admitted his selfishness, but that Mary made it worse instead of better, because she indulged him so much more than he deserved. As to the dedication, the chief fault he had to find with it was that it would not adequately represent his indebtedness to the dedicatee. Nobody would know who "M. G." was; and there were

objections of another kind to giving her name in full. After their marriage, however, he hoped to write a poem which should present in a fitting way the story of all that she had done for him—something after the manner of Tennyson's "Gardeners' Daughter," perhaps. This rejoinder left me without any means of continuing the quarrel, and was another example of the futility of losing one's temper; but this was not all. For the first time during our acquaintance, I found that I had seriously offended Mary. She would readily have forgiven me any criticism of herself, but not for putting her lover's conduct in an ignoble light. The truth that was in my charge only made it worse; and the fact that I had mixed her up in it was the worst of all. There is no use in apologizing to a woman who is in this frame of mind; the

only thing that could have appeased her would have been the conviction that what I had said was baseless. This being impracticable, she remained my enemy, though she was too proud to intimate it, save by a majestic frigidity of demeanor that rendered her as unapproachable as the North Pole.

The episode broke up our pleasant afternoon, and we did not meet again in the same way before my departure to New York. I had reason to think that Mary urged her lover to withdraw the commission to the publishers which I had asked leave to execute; but, if she did so, Fairfax was either too good-natured or too circumspect to follow her advice. He even took some pains to make me feel that he harbored no grudge against me, and wished our friendly relations to continue uninterrupted. At parting, he gave me the precious manu-

script and shook hands with me. Mary, instead of keeping out of the way, as a smaller woman would have done, was present on the occasion; and when I came up to her to say farewell, she looked me in the eyes and bade me good-by, but did not take my hand. She did not readily become hostile; but having done so, she would have nothing ambiguous or underhand about it.

CHAPTER VI.

I FOUND less difficulty than I had expected with the poem; there happened to be a publisher of literary tendencies who had read and admired Fairfax's previous volume, and who, after perusing the manuscript of "A Dream and a Forgetting," declared that the writer was a first-class poet, and that the book should go forth to the world with no other imprint than that of his own firm. Finding him in this humor, I ventured to introduce a suggestion as to the propriety of advancing something on account of the expected royalties;

and actually prevailed upon him to send Fairfax a check for one hundred dollars. I am inclined to think that Fairfax was not as grateful as he should have been; but money is money, even when the sum fulfils only one-tenth of our anticipations.

The name of this publisher was Daniel Cartaux. He was a wealthy man of about forty, who had bought a controlling interest in an old-established publishing firm. He was not a person of profound culture, but he had ambitions, both social and professional. He wished to put himself on a familiar footing with the best literary society, while keeping hand and glove with the fashionable set; and as a publisher, to achieve in this country the reputation acquired by the famous John Murray in the London of Byron's time. He gave weekly literary receptions at his house in town; kept

a box at the opera; owned some horses, and, apparently, had made up his mind that Fairfax Boardwine was to be his Lord Byron. Whatever might be predicted as to the future of the fashionable publisher, there could be no doubt that his existence was a fortunate circumstance for Fairfax, for the time being.

Mr. Cartaux's social success, however, was due much less to him than to his wife. She was some fifteen years younger than he, and a woman of extraordinary beauty and fascination. She was the daughter of an excellent New York family, and had received a thorough education—which meant, in her case, a great deal more than the ordinary school curriculum for girls. For her mind was unusually alert and penetrating; she was of a masterful and ambitious spirit, and was determined to be ex-

celled by no one. She not only surpassed her fellow-schoolmates in scholarship, but she read widely in "advanced" literature, and, by the time she was eighteen, knew more than most college graduates—what ever such knowledge may be worth. Nor had she simply stored her brain with acquired information; she had reasoned upon what she read, and had formed independent opinions upon all subjects of cultivated interest. Withal, she was not given to advertising her knowledge, but allowed her interlocutors to find it out for themselves—which they sometimes did in a manner not conducive to their self-esteem. Nothing of the blue stocking was apparent in her; she was chatty, witty and full of agreeable behavior, and no one could be dull in her company. Her voice was musical and distinct, but low—not a common thing in

American women; and the quickly-varying expressions of her subtle and exquisite face illustrated everything that she said.

This woman had married very young, knowing nothing of the world except through books and her own reflections. She had been worshipped and caressed in her own family, and had always been allowed to have her own way. The emotional side of her nature had never been called upon; she had liked rather than loved her parents, who had never concealed from her their conviction of her intellectual superiority; and for her companions of her own age (judging them as she was bound to do, by their mental acquirements only), she entertained a good-humored contempt. In short, she appeared fascinating but cold; it was easy for her to inspire love, but she seemed incapable of

returning it; but, since she could not miss what she had never known, she was probably unaware that her heart was deficient or unawakened. Accordingly, when a good-looking, manly, and wealthy man, offered her marriage, she calmly thought over the matter, and referred him to her parents. They approved of the match, for though of good stock, they were not rich, and were apt to believe that riches would be a blessing to their beautiful daughter; and the end of it was that she became Mrs. Cartaux, being then in her twentieth year, and knowing nothing of men and marriage save in theory—which is worse than no knowledge at all.

Had her husband been a colorless and easy man, she might have got on well enough with him; but he was a man of energy and positive views, which a lack of

education served only to render more obtrusive. He had a domineering will, no tact, and no comprehension of the subtle refinement of his wife's character; he loved her absurdly, without ever discovering the existence in her of those qualities that made her best worth loving. She soon learned to despise him, but she was not able to rule him; when she attacked him with her fine satirical weapons, he simply did not understand her drift, and laughed, as though some pleasant joke were intended. Her indifference gradually changed into active dislike, as she realized that she was bound for life with a man with whom she could have nothing in common—except that daily external life which was daily growing more distasteful to her. She could not lower herself to be like him; she could not uplift him to be like her; what should she do?

There are thousands of young women

who find themselves in such a position, and there are many ways in which they may find distraction or compensation; but there was an elevation and delicacy of nature in this woman which restrained her from seeking any vulgar solace; she did not care to become a leader of fashion; she did not covet the triumphs of a married flirt. This did not, it is true, prevent her from being always perfectly dressed, or from being surrounded, whenever she appeared in public, by a crowd of enthusiastic admirers; and furthermore, her studies in modern science and philosophy had tendered to emancipate her views; she questioned, in the privacy of her own thoughts, the dogmas of religion and of conventional morality, and was thereby deprived of the safeguard of an obedient faith. Her only safety was in her coldness, which had never yet been disturbed. She

saw no man for whom she could imagine herself as feeling any serious regard. And by this time she knew enough of human nature to believe what the world said of her—that she was not like other women, and that she had no heart. She accepted the verdict, but she also frankly regretted it. She would have been glad to meet with some man with power enough to open to her the one page of life upon which she had never looked. It piqued her to think that love—passion—was an experience whereof she could not partake. She longed for it because she could not have it. Anything that she might have had, she cared nothing for. Such is the nature of mankind, both male and female.

Her husband gradually realized her entire failure to respond to his affectionate advances, and he interpreted the fact in

the manner least likely to wound his self-esteem. It was not within her possibilities, he decided, to be enthusiastic on any subject; she was incapable of caring for anybody; no matter who had married her the result would have been the same. He felt disappointment, no doubt; but being a man of practical and active mind, he soon told himself that it was no use attempting to change the inevitable. His wife's conduct was irreproachable; her manners were perfect; her beauty was unquestionable; she was something to be proud of, and, for the rest, he had his club and his diversions as before his marriage. He was too thick-skinned to suffer much; yet, no doubt, he would have been a better and happier man if his matrimonial experiment had turned out more fortunately. After a few years he bought, as has been said, a controlling share

in a publishing business, and thereafter he had his hands too full of affairs to allow of his giving way to vain regrets, had he been so disposed. He found pleasure and satisfaction in his new employment, and, but for the delusion he cherished that he had a taste in literature, and a certain noisy confidence in his own judgment and business knowledge, he bade fair to make a fairly successful thing of it.

Mr. Cartaux did me the honor to invite me to dinner at his house, where I was introduced to his wife and to three or four other people. She received me very kindly and was an admirable hostess. Her conversation was not in the least abstruse or edifying; she laughed and chatted like any accomplished woman of the world; only there was, in everything that came from her, or appertained to her, a singular

quality of personal fascination. I sat beside her at the table, and she told me that she had read Mr. Boardwine's poem, and thought very highly of it.

"I am glad you gave my husband the opportunity of publishing it," she added, "it is not like the poetry which other young men write nowadays. It seems to have been written from the heart, not from the brain. It has something that makes me feel I should like to read it often. Is Mr. Boardwine as good as his poetry?"

"He looks as if he might have written it," I replied; and I gave a brief description of my friend's personal appearance.

"We have had so many disappointments," she remarked, after listening closely to my attempt at portraiture. "I mean the people who care for poetry are so often disappointed in the people who write

it. They say Mr. Browning looks like a solid man of business." And she mentioned some instances of failure to reach the physical ideal among the poets of our own country.

"Browning probably looked more poetic at Boardwine's age than he does now," said I. "But there are plenty of exceptions to your rule. Byron looked poetic enough, even after he had grown fat. So did Victor Hugo. So does Tennyson; and you could see all his poetry in Longfellow. You could not ask for a more characteristic-looking poet than our Walt Whitman; and, to go back to the last century again, there is Robert Burns——"

"I should like to have known him best of all!" interposed Mrs. Cartaux, who was sitting with her left hand on the table, crumbling the petals of a rose between her

delicate white fingers. She was a woman of rather slender, but perfectly developed figure, with round, tapering arms and throat, and an oval face, colorless, save for the deep red of the lips and the dark blue of the eyes—a blue as dark as that of the *lapis lazuli*. These eyes, in spite of their depth of color, had a coldly penetrating expression; and I noticed that the smile which so often touched her mouth never entered into her eyes at all. Her head was small and compact, but high above the ears; it was bound about with fair hair, that had a wrinkle in it, and was strongly inclined to curl. Perhaps the most remarkable quality of this countenance was the intellectual interest that it inspired, as distinct from the æsthetic. You felt the presence of a strong, questioning spirit behind the exquisite features; and this insensibly

drew you away from the consideration of her appearance to that of her personality. I had observed in Mary Gault a similar power (though produced by utterly different means) of making her beauty invisible. It was a curious point of resemblance between two women who were, in all other respects, as opposite to each other as the poles.

When Mrs. Cartaux said that she would like to have known Robert Burns best of all, the picturesqueness of the idea made her smile—this delicate creature face to face with the wonderful ploughman. But after a moment I fancied that I discerned in it a revelation of character or, perhaps, of moral history. She longed to come in contact with some man in whom the masculine quality was present in its most virile form, who was redolent of human nature

and human want and passion. Evidently, then, these elements must have been absent from her experience hitherto; and this might be the explanation of her coldness. She wanted to be grasped by a powerful hand, to be conquered by sheer strength, to be made to feel that there was a force in the world superior to the arguments of reason, the dictates of prudence, or the rules of morality. In other words, she had not yet fully come into her birthright; and she perceived, more or less vaguely, the deficiency which her unaided resources were powerless to supply.

At this juncture Mr. Cartaux's voice made itself heard from the other end of the table.

"Irene," he said, "I have a notion that it would be a good scheme to get Mr. Boardwine down here, and let him meet

some of the New York folks. It would be a pleasure to us to have him here, and, from a business point of view, it would be a good thing for his book. How does that strike you?"

"Like all your ideas, Robert," she answered, quietly; "it strikes me as excellent."

"Well, then," he continued, passing his thick hand over his head, on which the grizzled-brown hair stood short and upright, "what do you say?" addressing me. "Do you think Boardwine would find it convenient to accept an invitation?"

I intimated that I thought he would.

"Enough said, then!" exclaimed the publisher. "We'll have him here. He'll want to correct his proofs, anyhow, and it will be convenient for both of us to have him on the ground. My dear, I'll drop

him a line to-morrow to be here on Saturday. We'll have a little dinner, and a gathering to meet him afterward. I'll give the tip to some of the critics, and, altogether, I guess we can start a boom for that poem of his that will make him open his eyes."

"I have an idea that I shall like to know Mr. Boardwine," said Mrs. Cartaux, turning to me. "I have a curiosity about him."

"What is the ground of your curiosity?"

"I imagine he may be something like another Robert Burns. But, of course, I have imagined many things that did not turn out to be what I imagined."

It occurred to me, as I recalled the appearance and manner of my friend Fairfax, that perhaps Mrs. Cartaux would not be disappointed in him. It was even pos-

sible that she might be affected quite the other way. She could never have seen anybody at all like him; she would be prepossessed in his favor by his book, and while the novelty lasted she might take him at rather more than his full value. But how would she impress Fairfax?

"Is Mr. Boardwine married?" Mrs. Cartaux inquired.

"No," I said, "but—" I was going on to inform her that, though not married, he was betrothed, when Mr. Cartaux struck in with some question that delayed the rest of my sentence, and, as the ladies left the room a few moments later, I never completed it. Whether the upshot of the affair would have been different, had I told her of the existence of Mary Gault, is open to conjecture. Human destiny is seldom controlled by trifles, though it

sometimes appears to be so. If Fairfax and Mrs. Cartaux had no safeguard against mischief in themselves, they were not likely to have found any in the knowledge or ignorance of a fact more or less. Nevertheless, I have always regretted that Mary's name was not spoken on that occasion.

Fairfax received his invitation in due course, and accepted it. I met him on his arrival and conducted him to a ready-made clothing shop, where he was fitted out with a very respectable evening dress and morning costume. Thus adorned, he was certainly a fine-looking fellow, and there was every prospect that Mrs. Cartaux would not be disappointed. On the other hand, what man with the image of Mary Gault in his heart would waste a thought on any other woman?

CHAPTER VII.

THE events of the next month or so must be passed over briefly. The poem was printed and published; and it turned out to be not only a success with the judicious, but with that important person known as the general reader as well. I don't know how many thousand copies of it Mr. Cartaux brought out after the original edition was exhausted; but I know that it was not only for sale at the regular book-shops, but that piles of it appeared and disappeared on the railway and hotel book-stalls, just as if

it had been the last popular novel of romance or adventure. I have seen people of the middle class reading it in Elevated Railway trains, and I have heard it discussed in fashionable clubs and dining-rooms. The name of Fairfax Boardwine was, for the time being, more familiar in men's mouths than that of any American poet. His photograph was taken by a leading photographer, and a fashionable painter had him sit for his portrait in oils. The likeness thus produced was surprisingly good, and having been placed on exhibition, was contemplated by everybody who was anybody in New York. Altogether, few of our native literary men have had a triumph more complete.

This was very pleasant, and Fairfax wrote accounts of it to Mary, and spoke of having her come down to enjoy it with

him. Her visit, however, would have to be postponed a little, owing to a new project which had been started. This was nothing less than to dramatize the poem, and place it on the stage. The manager of a popular theatre, who was understood to have at heart the development of native dramatic talent, had made overtures for its production, and Fairfax was to set to work upon it immediately. He did not anticipate, he said, that it would take him long to finish the job; and then there was a prospect that he might become really rich—for a man-of-letters, that is to say. At present, he told her, the pecuniary returns from the book were not so gratifying as the reputation it had achieved; in fact, the quarterly returns had not yet fallen due, and what money he had received had been in the nature of a loan on account. But the

poem was still selling steadily, and he had no misgiving as to its ultimately proving satisfactory in this respect also. Only, one must be patient, and not rashly forecast the future.

I saw this letter a long time after it was written; had I seen it at the time, I should have pronounced it anything but an exaggeration of the real state of the case. Whatever may have been the amount of the quarterly payment, or the patience of the poet, it is certain that he did not seem to be at any loss for cash. Mr. Cartaux's advances on account could not have been niggardly. In the first place, Fairfax was already one of the most fastidiously dressed men in New York. The modest garments which he had got from the wholesale shops were discarded, and he appeared clad in the choicest conceptions of the foremost

tailor on the Avenue. He assumed, at the same time, a grave and imposing bearing, which, I must admit, suited him very well, but which I could not help smiling at a little, when I mentally contrasted it with the rather awkward and rustic manners which he brought with him six weeks before from his native village. But I suppose most men who become great undergo similar changes or modifications, and that I have no right to ridicule Fairfax merely because I happened to have been acquainted with his earlier as well as with his later phase.

Fairfax, then, in a black double-breasted coat, fitting closely to his stalwart figure, dark-gray striped trousers, a polished silk hat, and a long overcoat lined and faced with fur, was to be seen at certain hours strolling with a stately step along Fifth Avenue. At other hours he was visible at

any one of half a dozen clubs which had presented him with visitors' tickets. Again, he daily and punctiliously paid a round of calls at the houses of people worth knowing; and in the evenings you might find him at the opera, at the play, or at some reception where lions were in demand. And he dined out almost every day of his life.

So much for the social side of his life. His mornings were devoted to work and business. Sometimes he would be closeted with the theatrical manager aforesaid; sometimes he would enter the private office of Mr. Cartaux; but most often he stayed at home and busied himself at his writing-table, and occasionally received certain favored friends there. Among these it was my privilege to be counted; and I took the opportunity, some time after he was settled in his new quarters, to pay him a visit.

He received me with much cordiality. The rooms he occupied were in a side street, somewhere between West Thirty-fourth and Twenty-third Streets, and not far from Fifth Avenue. They consisted of a sitting-room, bed-room, and bath-room, and formed a very good apartment. I noticed that, with the quick apprehension that perhaps belongs to the artistic and poetic temperament, he had already caught the æsthetic fashion of the day, and had decorated his rooms in a manner to harmonize with the prevailing taste. Everything was subdued, but interesting; quiet, but "individual." There was a lapse from perfection here and there, but, upon the whole, considering the brevity of his apprenticeship, he had done remarkably well. With a year's experience and adequate means, he would be able to lead the fashion instead of following it.

Fairfax was himself attired in a dressing-gown of dull-purple cashmere, faced with quilted satin of old-gold hue. A Turkish fez surmounted his dark, curly hair; on his feet were purple morocco slippers. I never had seen him looking so well, and yet I felt that I liked him better in his red-flannel shirt and cowhide boots.

When I came in he was looking at a book, which he closed and pushed to one side on coming forward to greet me. I had scarcely exchanged half a dozen words with him since his first arrival in New York, so that we had something to talk about.

"I like New York," he said, in answer to my queries. "I like it, that is, as a phenomenon. There is mental warmth and stimulus in the atmosphere of a great city. I doubt if it depends on the people one actually meets. I find that men who really

think are as rare in the city as in the country. The variety of subjects discussed is greater, of course; but it is all hearsay; everybody repeats; the man who originates keeps out of sight. Much of it is new to me, in a way; and yet I seem to have heard it all before. The danger of a city is, I take it, that you are liable to lose your individual quality. You become a mere component atom of the great homogeneous mass. The essence of good-breeding is to be unnoticeable—to be like the rest. And the circle of mental activity is small—much smaller than it appears at first sight. Under different names, the same little group of ideas is canvassed over and over again. If I were to leave here to-morrow, and return in a year, or in ten years, I should find everybody just where I left them. Progress itself is powerless to make them

budge. Electrical inventions, air navigation, the Keely motor, may be or become facts; but 'the straitened forehead of the fool' will remain as strait as before. Imagination and the faculties of wonder and reverence die out in large communities. You are never alone with the sky and the trees and the waters. You see nothing but other people of the same size and pattern as yourself, and the spectacle diminishes your conception of the grandeur of the universe. Nevertheless, as I said before, I like New York, for a time—regarding it as an episode of experience. It will be useful to remember and look back upon hereafter. It gives me something which it has not got itself. But I should not care to live here permanently, year in and year out. A man would have no time to himself, for one thing, and there are other reasons."

"You have modified your opinion on that point since you came here, then," I remarked. "I recollect you spoke of wishing to take up your residence here."

"I omitted to take certain things into consideration. I shall probably come down here for two or three months each year during the season, and that is all."

"I suppose Mary is of your mind about it?"

"I don't imagine she will object, when she hears from me how the matter lies," he replied, with (as I fancied) a certain constraint of manner. "She is a sensible girl, and has never been spoilt."

"She would make a sensation, and have a great social success, if she did come here," I said. "I don't know any woman here who could hold a candle to her."

"There is no one exactly like her, cer-

tainly," returned Fairfax, with a kind of reserve in his tone that irritated me a little. He had been talking all along in a grave, judicial manner, as if his utterances were a matter of serious responsibility to him. "She has exceptional merits; but it does not follow that she has all the qualities that fit her to shine in fashionable society. She would not fall in easily with its ways and ideas—she has not that sort of adaptability—and I greatly doubt whether she could ever be comfortable here. She is better where she is. It would be a mistake to uproot her, and attempt to make her flourish in a foreign soil."

"Wherever she is, there will be the best society," said I; and I said no more on that subject at the time, thinking it well to choose another theme. "You seem to be busy here," I observed. "Do you get much work done?"

"I exact a certain amount from myself every day," the poet replied. "But that means simply that I am not composing—only recomposing, at most. One cannot measure one's inspiration off in lengths, and cause just so much to materialize every day. I am working over the stuff of the poem into a drama; I dare say you have heard about it—the news has got about more than I could have wished."

I admitted that I had heard of it, and asked him whether he found the work easy.

"It's a novelty to me," he answered, with an intonation of resigned *ennui*. "It is agreeable in that respect, and whatever is agreeable is easy. Besides, I like to think that the scenes and events of the poem are to become visible and palpable, as well as objects of thought."

"But isn't there danger that the fine

points of the poem may be marred by the actors?"

"No doubt; but that is a peril which I must share with all other dramatists. When I have provided the actors with the right things to do and say I have done all that can be expected of me. Providence must take care of the rest."

"And you are writing nothing else besides this?"

"Well, nothing very serious. Occasionally, however, the mood comes upon me, and I turn off some trifle." He hesitated a moment, and then drew from among some papers a sheet of cream-laid note, on which was neatly written a sonnet. He passed it over to me; it was headed "The Heart's Orbit," and was a very gracefully expressed poem, with something passionate glowing beneath the words. The idea was that of a

heart drawn to its beloved object by all the forces of sympathy and fascination, but at the same time prevented from approaching within a fixed distance by the obstacles of duty and circumstance. The few concluding lines intimated that the centripetal force was the stronger of the two, and that the end would be a coming together that would be as sweet as fatal.

The sonnet was a little gem; but there was a quality in it that was new with Fairfax, and that I was hardly prepared for. It showed a development, but not of an altogether wholesome kind. There was less of the spirit and more of the flesh in it than in his previous work. As an achievement of art it was admirable; but I could not help being sensible of a personal element in it, which, under the circumstances, was not so welcome. The lines could hardly

have been addressed to Mary; and if not to her, then to whom? After all, I was probably mistaken; it was a poet's fancy, and nothing more.

"How do you get on with Cartaux?" I asked, after I had praised the sonnet. "Is he the Mæcenas of authors that we have been looking for so long?"

"Cartaux is a good fellow, and means well," Fairfax said. "He lacks culture, of course. I have nothing to complain of in his treatment of me."

"His wife is pretty, if she is not cultivated," I remarked.

Fairfax was silent for a moment, but the blood mounted to his face. At length he said: "Mrs. Cartaux is not like her husband. She made a mistake in marrying him. It is the curse of civilization that such contracts are binding."

After a little indifferent conversation, he remarked that he had an appointment uptown, and that if I would excuse him for a moment he would put on his coat and hat, and we would walk together as far as our roads coincided. He retired into the bedroom, and I took up the book at which he had been looking when I entered. It turned out to be a copy of his poem, bound in a most sumptuous style, and with a blank leaf inserted between each of the several divisions or cantos, on which sonnets were written in Fairfax's own handwriting. The last of these was "The Heart's Orbit," of which he had just shown me a copy. Evidently the volume was unique, and was intended as a gift to someone. But to whom, unless to Mary Gault? I turned to the fly-leaf, but there was no inscription on it. Fairfax now came back, dressed to go

out. On seeing the book in my hand, he looked annoyed.

"It is very handsomely got up," I said, "and these additions of yours make it eminently valuable. You keep it for yourself, I presume?"

"I—no—that is, it is a private copy," he replied, in a more sullen and, I may add, natural tone than he had yet used.. "I didn't mean it to be seen—at present. Are you ready?" And he led the way out of the room.

OF NEW YORK.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN we reached the sidewalk, Fairfax said that he had forgotten something, and he went back into the house for it. He reappeared immediately, and we walked along together for a couple of blocks, when I left him, with a misgiving in my mind that all was not right with him. But I had no right to interfere. The worst of these cases is that there is seldom anything to be done until after the event.

Whither was Fairfax bound that forenoon? I surmised, then, somewhat of the facts, which I learned in detail long afterward.

After we separated he went to Cartaux's house, and was promptly admitted. Mr. Cartaux was not in—Fairfax did not even go through the ceremony of asking for him. He knew that it was his habit not to return from the office until after four o'clock, and he had previously assured himself that this particular day would be no exception to the rule. Leaving his overcoat and hat in the hall, he was shown into a small sitting-room opening out of the back drawing-room, and there he waited.

He was kept waiting some minutes—long enough to make him restless. He had time to think over the first words he intended to say to Mrs. Cartaux, and to dismiss them as unsatisfactory. Then he began to speculate as to what was detaining her, and imagined her putting finishing touches to her toilet, taking a peep into

the looking-glass, placing a flower in her hair. At all events, it was certain that she was thinking of him, and that conviction was sweet. He recalled the tones of her voice, her smile, the way she stood and moved. How beautiful in every respect she was, and what endless delight and satisfaction there were in such beauty! He moved about while indulging in these reflections; he was filled with an agreeable eagerness and excitement that prevented him from remaining motionless. He glanced at himself in a small ebony-framed mirror that stood on the table, and passed his hands through his hair, giving it a becoming roughness. He looked at his right hand, and thought that in a few moments her hand would be placed in it—that soft, speaking hand, so full of character.

Mrs. Cartaux appeared in the doorway,

as if she had been standing there from the first, but had hitherto been invisible. Her aspect surpassed Fairfax's recollection of it, as it always did. Her color and contour was so pure and clear that the woman was always vividly defined, like the petal of a wild rose in a wayside jungle, or like Romeo's "rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." And yet nothing could be more delicate and refined than was everything appertaining to her. But she made her surroundings seem coarse and rude.

She was dressed without any ornament whatever. Her gown was of fine black velvet, fitting closely to her figure, with an opening before and behind, showing her white throat and neck. Across the lower part of the front opening was visible the lace border of a chemisette, but the dress was entirely without trimming or embroid-

ery. She wore neither ear-rings, necklace, nor bracelet; the hoop of gold upon the third finger of her left hand was the only bit of jewelry about her. Her hair, abundant and silky, and of a soft golden hue, was gathered up and wrapped around, turban-like, on the top of her small but finely proportioned head. Beneath the yellow hair, in the clear pallor of her face, the dark eyes sparkled; and her scarlet lips, full, but not too full, and curved just enough, but not too much, looked like the gates of all winning speech. She was in the flower of her womanhood and loveliness.

Fairfax advanced gravely to shake hands with her; but she said: "Do not let us shake hands—I am tired of it. I am glad to see you. Come and sit down. I should like to start for the tropics to-morrow."

Though she would not shake hands with

him, she took his hand in hers and led him to a sofa. Her self-possession and *savoir-faire* disconcerted him, and magnetized him at the same time. He sat down beside her, and felt a sensation of measureless content in being so near her again. It was a sensation that he had already learnt to crave, as is commonly the case with people who have recourse to powerful stimulants.

"Are you going to stay to lunch?" she asked.

"Yes."

"You will have to put up with me alone, then. Nobody else is coming."

"That is what I expected."

"One thing I like about you," she said, inclining her head sidewise and smiling at him from beneath her eyelashes, "is that you so often say what you mean. It has a most startling effect, and sometimes quite

discomposes me. You are a novelty—the greatest boon on earth to a woman like me. But I wonder you come here!”

“You know why I come here.”

“If I were you I should hate married women. I hate them as it is.”

“I don’t know much of married women in general. I hate or like particular persons. I might hate your marriage, but that is no reason for hating you.”

“That is, practically, a distinction without a difference.”

“It is not, in your case; for you do not seem like a married woman at all.”

“That is not civil!” she exclaimed. “Nobody ever said such a thing to me.”

“It is natural that you should not seem married,” Fairfax continued, unmoved by

her protest. "You have no children, and you care nothing for your husband."

"You know nothing about my relations with my husband, Mr. Boardwine."

"You have never cared for anyone, but you would like to, if you could."

"Do you mean to tell me that I have no capacity for natural affections?" she said, with a short laugh.

"You may have the capacity, but you have never had the experience. You are so clever, and so determined not to let anyone get the best of you in that way, that you miss the real part of life. You not only miss it, but you keep it away from you—you're afraid of it."

"And what, in your opinion, is the real part of life?"

"Love," replied Fairfax, looking her full in the face.

She dropped her eyes after a moment.

"How can I keep love away from me?" she asked. "According to you poets, it comes 'unasked, unsought.'"

"It cannot come where no place is prepared for it. If the seed falls on stony ground, it will not grow. You are like other women in society. You spend your youth—and think it is well spent—in drying up your hearts and turning them to stone. You have been taught by your mothers, I suppose, to beware of passion—to beware of committing or compromising yourselves. And that is the result."

"You surely don't advocate a woman's compromising herself?"

"That is not the true alternative."

"What other is there?"

"You might as well say that the only way to keep from committing murder is to

kill yourself. It is better, isn't it, to keep your life, and to resist the temptation to murder? To do as you are doing is indolent and cowardly. You kill the faculty of love in yourself—which is as bad as suicide—for fear the presence of that faculty, and the absence of any principle, should get you into a scrape."

"Even admitting that—which, of course, I don't—the 'scrape,' as you call it, is worth any sacrifice to avoid."

"I don't agree with you," returned Fairfax, firmly. "The best thing in a woman is her womanliness—her tenderness, her love. People are to be judged by their motives. It is well to be good from a good motive. But if your motive is selfishness, timidity, fear of social shame, it is worth nothing, for there is no soul in it. You would be guilty but for the dread of being

found out; and so you are guilty in reality.”

“No, no! to meditate, or even to desire a sin, is not the same as to commit it.”

“It is worse, if no honest motive restrains you. If you act from self-interest, instead of from conscience, you lose a thousand times more than you gain—you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage.”

“You are saying that if anything but conscience withhold you from sin, then sin is better than virtue!”

“It is better, for at least it is natural—it is not hypocrisy. It is hypocrisy and timidity that corrupt the heart. I am preaching good Scripture, Mrs. Cartaux. Christ anathematized the Scribes and Pharisees, but he forgave the sinful woman. The Scribes and Pharisees never repent, but the sinner may. So I say, as I began by saying, that you would have been a better

and happier woman, if you had not let your intellect wither up your heart."

This was undoubtedly very unusual conversation to address to a lady. And it was especially remarkable under the circumstances. For what business had Fairfax Boardwine, betrothed as he was to Mary Gault, to be on terms of this kind with Mrs. Cartaux or with any other woman? By talking in this style to Mrs. Cartaux, he was betraying the vows he had plighted to Mary. It made no difference how much or how little truth there was in what he said. Were it true as gospel, he had no right to say it to her.

On the other hand, human motives are complicated, and must not be condemned off-hand. There is no need of mincing matters with the reader; let us call things by their right names, and admit, what we

already know, that Fairfax was infatuated with Mrs. Cartaux—that he was in love with her. Did he, by what he said, intend to disgust her with himself, or the reverse? If the former, it was an extraordinary and almost unprecedented step for a lover to take, and rendered him worthy of high eulogy. But if it were his object to stimulate her regard for him, is it not curious that he should have chosen to hold forth on this particular topic? Was there no other that would have suited him as well, and have been infinitely more pleasing and less embarrassing to her?

Let us remember there was a great deal of subtlety underneath the ruggedness of Fairfax's exterior, and that he possessed, besides, the insight into character of a man of genius, and furthermore, that he had made an especial study of the philosophy of

love. Recognizing these facts; it is not unfair to assume that he knew what he was about. He was too original and too sagacious to attack Mrs. Cartaux with the weapons commonly employed by gentlemen in his situation. He perceived that, if she were to be subdued, it must be by entirely novel and unexpected methods. Now, the devil is never so dangerous as when he quotes Scripture to his purpose. The sermon Fairfax delivered was his honest conviction as to the questions treated in it, and for that very reason it was a more potent weapon in a dishonest cause. He impressed her; he dominated her; he scared her; and he also said things which were likely to upset such moral notions as she might have on hand. It is true that they might in time inculcate sounder views; but the chances were that time would not be

available; she would, at the most critical moment, be in a transition state—neither one thing nor the other. And an additional peril was, that she was an accomplished woman of the world, inured to all social emergencies, and therefore would deem herself safe against a country bumpkin like Fairfax, even if he were a country bumpkin of genius. But Fairfax knew that there are certain qualities and certain passions which are not dependent for their potency on the accidents of education and environment; and it was these passions and qualities that were primarily and essentially concerned in the present affair. Nevertheless, it may be said that this is not giving Fairfax the fair benefit of a doubt.

Well, collateral circumstances sometimes have unexpected weight in these cases. The reader will recall that Fairfax went

back to his rooms, after leaving them with me, to get something that he had forgotten. This something was the bound and embellished volume of his poem, which has already been described. Some time after the above conversation, when things had resumed their wonted aspect between the two, he produced this volume, and he requested her acceptance of it as a gift. He read to her a dozen or more love-sonnets that he had interpolated, and she knew all the better for his not telling it to her in so many words, that they were inspired by and addressed to her. She accepted the gift, sonnets and all, in what manner or with what emotions, we need not inquire.

But, if Fairfax had intended to repel her by his sermon, it is difficult to understand what his object could have been in presenting her with the book.

CHAPTER IX.

FAIRFAX was very prompt in putting the poem in a shape to fit it for the stage, and as soon as the dialogue was completed, the parts were assigned, and rehearsals began. He was kind enough to send me a card of admission to these preparatory exercises; but they took place at a time of day when it was difficult for me to be present, and besides, I was a little reluctant to see the thing in its inchoate state: I wanted to think it successful, and feared to risk disenchantment. Meanwhile, I met him occasionally, and learned from him that everything was proceeding satisfactorily.

"I have made an arrangement with the manager," he added, "which will be very much to my advantage. I have undertaken to defray half the expense of producing the play, and in return he and I make an equal division of the profits."

"I doubt the advantage," replied I, shaking my head sagely.

"Why so? What is a royalty of say, twenty-five dollars a night compared with half the profits!"

"But your initial outlay must be a large one; and it may take a long time to recover it, even with half the profits."

"I think you are mistaken. The theatre seats fifteen hundred, at an average price of, say, a dollar a head. Put the nightly expenses at half that. That leaves seven hundred dollars for the manager and me to divide after each performance. It won't

take many weeks at twenty-four hundred dollars a week, to cover my outlay and leave me to the good."

"That may be quite true; but you mustn't forget that although the expenses will always remain at the same figure, the receipts may occasionally—well—vary!"

"That is to say, you believe the play will be a failure," exclaimed Fairfax, losing his temper.

"Nonsense! how can I believe one thing or the other? I know the poem was good; but nobody can ever foretell the fate of a play until after the opening night, and I have never so much as heard a line of the dialogue. Every business transaction should be looked at from both sides. You may succeed—the chances seem to be in favor of it—but suppose you do fail, what then?"

"Then I shall pay my debts and step

out, that's all," returned Fairfax; and he made me a formal salute with his gloved hand and walked off. I was left to hope that he would be able to pay his debts as easily as to say that he could do so, and to reflect upon the amiable sagacity of the theatre-manager.

To tell the truth, however, everything promised as great a dramatic success for Fairfax as his literary one had been; and of course, if the promise were fulfilled, the pecuniary returns would be a hundred-fold greater. The newspapers began to be full of squibs and paragraphs relating to the play; not regular advertisements, but answering the purpose better. What we are pleased to call society was interested in the affair; and there was no doubt that the opening house, at least, would be a crowded one. The actors were reported

to be satisfied with their parts, and the manager's face, whenever the play was mentioned in his hearing, was wreathed in the sultriest smiles. Fairfax himself received universal homage and flattery, in anticipation of his triumph; and I am bound to say that he accepted it with the dignity and self-possession of a monarch. He was assiduous at rehearsals, and sometimes spoke to me of the arduous nature of his duties in seeing that everything was done exactly as it should be. "It is really amusing," he observed, "how like a pack of children these actors and actresses are! They are so easily pleased and so easily put out; and they never seem to know what to do until they are told. They refer everything to me, and seem unwilling to take a single step on their own responsibility. Well, the responsibility belongs to

me, and I am willing to shoulder it. I don't think I shall have occasion to regret it. And yet I should be less confident, perhaps, if it were not for Mrs. Cartaux."

"Mrs. Cartaux! What has she to do with it?"

Fairfax stiffened directly.

"Mrs. Cartaux is the best friend I have, and her advice and sympathy have been of the highest service to me. She is kind enough occasionally to accompany me to rehearsals, and has made a great many valuable suggestions."

"I should have thought Mary Gault might have been of some use, considering that it was she who suggested the whole scheme of the story to you."

"I think you fail to discriminate," was Fairfax's reply. "Because Mary happened to dream a certain dream, and to remember

the outlines of it the next day, it doesn't follow that she has the culture and experience to criticise and correct a play."

"No; and the contrary doesn't follow from that, either. Nevertheless, I would as soon take her judgment as to whether the thing was good or bad as Mrs. Cartaux's, or any other woman's. But I never understood, Fairfax, that Mrs. Cartaux had been connected with the stage in any way."

"If you wish to insult ladies, I must request you to select such as are not of my acquaintance."

"I was simply following out your own suggestion," returned I, with my most amiable manner. "As for Mrs. Cartaux, I have known her longer than you have, though, perhaps not in the same way. By the by, how does Cartaux himself like your drama?"

"Cartaux has not seen it," said Fairfax, shortly.

"Oh! he lets his wife go to the theatre without him, does he?"

"Mrs. Cartaux is a married woman, and may be supposed to be safe under my escort."

"But you and she must have spoken to him about it? He must know how it is going on, and have his opinion in regard to it?"

"I can give you no information on that point," said Fairfax, biting his lip, and turning red.

"What are you going to do with Mary, when she comes down, I inquired.

"When she comes down! What do you mean?" The blood receded from his cheeks, leaving him quite pale.

"When she comes down to the first night,

of course! Where is she going to sleep, and that sort of thing?"

"Oh! well, I—I haven't decided about that yet. I'm not sure that she had better come down to the first performance. If it should turn out a failure, she would feel very badly. When the success is assured, it will be time enough. Besides, as you say, there would be a difficulty about putting her up."

"I said nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I was about to say that my aunt is coming to town next week, and would be happy to have Mary stay with her. I will tell her to send an invitation."

"I would rather you didn't do that," said Fairfax, hastily, and looking much disturbed. Then he assumed a haughty air, and added: "When Mary comes here, the arrangements for her reception must be

made by me. I do not care to delegate them to any one else."

This conversation left me in no cordial mood toward Fairfax. I more than suspected that he was acting the part of a rascal. He was infatuated with Mrs. Cariaux, and the feeling must have been mutual, since she was imprudent enough to accompany him to the theatre without the knowledge of her husband. He was shirking his duty toward Mary, and evidently desired nothing so little as her presence in New York. What would be the upshot of it? And was there nothing that I, as the friend of Mary, could or ought to do? I thought it all over many times, but could not see my way clear.

A few days later I happened to be passing the theatre at which the play was to be presented, and went in to take a look at

the rehearsal. The card which Fairfax had given me long before enabled me to pass the door-keeper. The interior of the theatre was dark, only a few of the foot-lights being lighted. There were a number of people on the stage, in their everyday dress, some speaking the lines of their parts, others leaning against the wings, making comments and suggestions, or chatting among themselves. A man was standing with his arms resting upon the back row of seats in the parquet. I asked him whether Mr. Boardwine were in the house. He told me that I would probably find him in the stage box at the right. I made my way thither, my tread falling noiselessly on the carpeted floor. At the end of the narrow passage there was a door, partly open. I pushed it open more widely, and looked in, to see whether Fairfax were there.

The box was deep, and the curtain on the stage-front was half drawn. A gas fixture protruded from the wall, but the gas was not lit. The interior was therefore quite dark. At first I thought the box was empty; but in a moment I discerned two figures standing up together just in front of the curtain. They stood close together; and I heard Fairfax's voice utter two words in an undertone. I drew back, retraced my way along the passage, and regained the street.

There was no longer any doubt as to the necessity of doing something. Mischief was already afoot. Whether it had yet proceeded to irrevocable lengths, I was inclined to doubt, though I hoped more from Mrs. Cartaux's prudence than from the honesty of either party. But, as Mary's friend, and even as Fairfax's, I felt it in-

cumbent upon me to take some action without delay. Circumstances must, to an extent, determine what form that action should take. I shall make little further allusion to my part in the drama that followed. It did not appear on the surface, and was never known to some of the persons concerned.

The opening night was fixed for a Monday. Mr. Cartaux, on the previous Friday, left town for Chicago on an urgent business mission, and did not expect to be back until the middle or end of the following week. He would therefore be unable to see the first performance; but Mrs. Cartaux remained in New York for that purpose, and it was arranged that she should follow her husband on Tuesday, and return with him.

My aunt arrived on Saturday. I met her

at the station, accompanied her to her house, and spent a couple of hours in conversation with her.

On Saturday evening one of the eminent personages of society gave a reception—the words, “To meet Mr. Fairfax Boardwine,” being added to the invitations. It was the height of the season; there was a crush of people. My aunt and myself were invited, and I made a point of being present. As for my aunt, she had, as a consequence of our conversation, gone out of town for a couple of days. My aunt was an excellent creature, an accomplished woman of the world, and, withal, good and kind. I would have picked her out of a thousand to give help in difficult and delicate circumstances.

On my way to the reception, I called in at Fairfax’s. I knew he would have pre-

ferred to have me let him alone, but it did not suit my plans to do so. I greeted him with rather more effusion than usual, recited to him all the flattering things I had heard said about the play, and soon had him in a tolerably gracious mood. But I perceived a covert anxiety and restlessness in his demeanor. He was preoccupied, and several times answered me at random, or did not hear my question until I had repeated it. At length I told him that he was looking tired and run down, and suggested that it would be a wise thing for him to leave town on the day after the performance, and take a short vacation-trip.

"I had thought of doing that," he answered, immediately. "I think I do need some relaxation. I shouldn't wonder if I did disappear for a while on Tuesday."

"Have you decided where to go?" I asked, carelessly.

"I have no idea whatever—in fact, I had thought nothing about it until you spoke," he replied, unconsciously contradicting his previous statement.

"Then why not come with me and surprise Mary?" I exclaimed. "She will be anxious to hear about the success of the play, and who can tell her better than yourself? I will go with you to add my congratulations."

Fairfax's face changed and, for a moment, I thought the evil one had been worsted in him. The picture of Mary's pure joy in his triumph—the remembrance of his love for her—the conviction that, in losing her, he would lose all that made him a man—these things, coming so sharply in contrast with the purpose he was aiming for and brooding over, shook him, and almost broke him down. But I doubt whether an evil

that has been a long while developing can be destroyed by however vivid a flash of heavenly lightning. The cure, if it be curable, must be as deliberate as the disease. At all events, an accident clinched the matter, in this case. A servant knocked at the door, and handed Fairfax a note. Scarcely glancing at the superscription, he thrust it unopened into his pocket. He might as well have shown it to me—the flush that came over him, the eager sparkle in his eye, the satisfied smile that flickered about his mouth showed me more than I cared to see. Recollecting himself after a moment, he mumbled some falsehood or other as a reason for declining my proposal, and then asked me to excuse him, as he had to keep a business appointment before going to the reception, and would bid me good-by until he met me at the

latter place. So I left him to read his letter, and enjoy whatever bliss it might bring him. He arrived at the reception half an hour after I did. He came alone, and Mrs. Cartaux did not appear at all. It was a piece of belated prudence characteristic of people in their situation. It could deceive nobody whose suspicions had been aroused, though it might, perhaps, set others to thinking.

CHAPTER X.

THE reception was a brilliant affair, and Fairfax received homage enough to satisfy the most ambitious young Napoleon of literature. But it was remarked, in some quarters, that it might have been as well to postpone the reception until after the performance; to which the rejoinder was made that, in that case, it might have been postponed altogether. In other words, Fairfax's phenomenal prosperity had already begun to raise him up enemies.

Sunday passed quietly. In the afternoon I called upon Mrs. Cartaux, but was informed at the door that she had gone to

bed with a bad headache. On the card which I left I wrote, "Will try again to-morrow." My object was simply to lead her to imagine that somebody's curiosity or suspicion might have been aroused. I did not believe that she was as yet prepared openly to defy society, but only intended to outwit it. The idea that she was being watched might induce her to postpone the step; and, in such cases, postponement often gives leisure for wiser and better counsels to prevail. I did not attempt to see her on Monday. Meanwhile, I received a telegram from my aunt that everything was progressing favorably at her end of the line.

The performance was announced for eight o'clock; but at half-past seven I was already in the street outside the theatre-doors; and I was not the first on the ground

either. People were already beginning to arrive—by ones and twos and in groups—and were filing up to the box-office. These were the general public, who had not secured reserved seats. They kept coming thicker and thicker, until a great many of them had gone in; and now the carriages came rolling along, and paused to discharge their occupants, male and female, in evening dress, at the door. I stood at the opposite side of the street, a little below the façade of the theatre, watching them go in. By the glare of the lamps, I recognized many of them—people whom everyone knows in New York. On the placards beside the door-way was emblazoned the title of the play—"A Dream and a Forgetting." I was struck, for the first time, by the singular aptness of the title of the drama to that other drama which was being enacted

in secret behind it. Poor Mary Gault! for her it was, indeed, a dream and a forgetting.

The night was cold, and there was a wind blowing. To keep myself warm (for I did not wish to enter the theatre until the last moment), I turned and tramped down the street toward the great thoroughfare that crossed the end of it. As I paused there for a moment, I saw a carriage draw up at the curb. It contained a man and a woman. The man opened the door and got out; he was muffled up in his fur-trimmed overcoat, and his fur-cap was drawn down over his forehead, but he was recognizable enough; and the warm pallor and dark eyes of the woman, discernible for a moment as the carriage moved on to join the procession—she, too, was not to be mistaken. I faced about, walked back up the street, and went

into the theatre. My seat was on the centre-aisle of the parquet, about five rows from the front.

The atmosphere of a first night, just before the curtain rises, is apt to be charged with agreeable suspense and stimulus. This pleasant excitement of anticipation was plainly perceptible on the present occasion. Everyone was animated—there was a buzz of polite conversation and laughter; people spoke not only to those sitting next to them, but to friends at a distance; gentlemen stood up and looked here and there through their opera-glasses, occasionally nodding to a recognized face. In all directions there was a smile and an affable murmur, and a rustle of the handsome, tinted programme which had been designed and prepared expressly for this entertainment. A great number of handsome and pretty

women were present; indeed, the belles of New York seemed to be gathered together expressly to unite in a chime of praise of the new poet and dramatist. If there was a hostile element present, it was not visible. It seemed to be taken for granted that all would go well.

When the orchestra played its first bar there was a hush, immediately followed by a renewed buzz of conversation. Then the curtain went up, and silence settled over the audience like the shadow of a cloud upon a landscape.

The play was in four acts, and differed considerably from the poem, as was of course to be expected; but the differences were not in the way of improvement. The delicate poetical touches were lost in the

dialogue, and what had been beautiful by reason of the artistic atmosphere thrown over it was shown to be very commonplace and cheap material when divested of that enchantment. What was not conventional was silly; what was not silly was preposterous. It had been anticipated that if the play were wanting in other respects it would be redeemed by certain powerful dramatic situations, rumors of which had been suffered to reach the public ear. There was, to be sure, a "tableau" at the end of each act; but to say that they failed to produce the proper effect upon the audience would be a triumph of understatement. In short, I have not the heart, even at this distance of time, to describe the dreary and sordid disaster of Fairfax's play. It passed the point of being depressing and melancholy—to those who

had known the poem, it was little less than infuriating. The sweat gathered on my forehead as I looked and listened. How could Fairfax have done such a thing? Was his the coarse, feeble and unspiritual mind that had perpetrated this calamity? The worst feature of the miserable affair was that the play had been generated from the poem. It was as if some maiden whom you loved and revered, and who had been an inspiration and ideal of your life, should all at once appear before you as a vulgar, stupid and sensual jade. It was actually revolting.

The audience, during the first ten or fifteen minutes, attempted to applaud. Then it sat still and waited for something good to turn up. Then a deadly stillness and lethargy fell upon it. Next was perceptible a subdued muttering of uneasiness and

apprehension. Then somebody in the gallery hissed; and the hiss was so hearty, so genuine, so plainly the outcome of hope turned to disgust, and so poignantly expressive of the sentiment of everybody present, that, so far from there being any attempt to suppress it, a great many people laughed outright; and from that moment all was over. Laughter, hisses and ironical applause followed and alternated with one another. The imp of disorder seemed to be let loose. A number of the audience left the theatre; but many remained, and when the curtain had descended the last time upon what was intended to be a tragic climax, and which, though tragic enough in another than the dramatic sense, was received with shouts of laughter, they clamored for the author!

While this was going on I had been

looking about for Mrs. Cartaux. To my surprise, she was in neither of the boxes. I was left to conjecture that she had thought it prudent not to appear too prominently, in order to disarm those who might be disposed to couple her name with Fairfax's. Of course she could not have foreseen the disaster which was to occur, and which rendered the position of those who vainly supported Fairfax anything but enviable. But where was she? It was not until the performance was more than half over that I discovered her. She was sitting in the parquet on the left of the house, one row nearer the stage than I; and with her were the lady and gentleman with whom, in the absence of her husband, she had arranged to make a party.

When I saw her she was sitting very quietly, with her gloved hands folded in

her lap and her eyes cast down. You would have thought she was absorbed in reverie, and was as little conscious of the proceedings behind the footlights as those in front of them. This attitude she maintained for a long time; then her neighbor turned to her with some remark. She listened with a smile and answered from behind her fan. Apparently her answer was witty, for the other burst into a laugh, which at the same moment was taken up and multiplied by the audience, in scornful merriment at some fresh ineptitude in the play. It was evident that Mrs. Cartaux was not going to betray her mortification; and her grief, if she felt any, was no less undemonstrative. This self-possession was the more noteworthy if, as was rumored, she had taken a considerable part in suggesting the divergences from the

poem which had been introduced into the play. If she would have claimed a part of the glory, she was amenable to some of the shame. I would have liked to look into her mind and see the thoughts and emotions that were hidden there.

At length, when all was over, and the audience was calling for the author, as aforesaid, she and her companions arose leisurely and walked up the aisle. A moment later, and quite contrary to my anticipations, the curtain was drawn aside and Fairfax stepped out before the footlights.

He was in full evening dress, with a flower in his button-hole, and though his face was pale, he appeared composed, and had never looked more handsome. The audience was probably not less surprised than myself and its surprise had the effect of quieting it. Fairfax stood erect for a

moment, and then made a very profound bow.

The salute was so manifestly defiant and ironical that it stirred up the audience afresh. Some of them admired the pluck of the defeated man, who was determined to die game, and they applauded; others were angry at his still having the presumption to show fight, and they hissed and howled their displeasure. Then two or three called out, "Speech! speech!" and the cry was taken up, with a general clapping of hands and stamping.

Fairfax raised one hand, and the storm gradually sunk, until there was a sort of muttering stillness, which became more complete as his voice became audible.

"If it be true, ladies and gentlemen," he began, "that the aim of a dramatist should be to amuse the public, I may conclude

that my play has this evening had a remarkable success. You have laughed, and laughter is understood to be the expression of amusement. It is true that the drama at which you have laughed was a tragic drama,"—at this point there was a great uproar and jeering, but Fairfax doggedly waited until it ceased, and then he continued—"but it is the characteristic of fools to laugh out of season, and I would not have you other than you are!"

Hereupon ensued an indescribable uproar; people yelled and gesticulated, and some jumped to their feet, as if bent on physical mischief. Courage is all very well, but Fairfax was overdoing it; his self-possession was assumed, and he was losing his head. Not for the first time in his life he had trusted to his intellect to carry him through an emergency where

something much stronger and weightier than intellect is indispensable. He had the intelligence to comprehend the elements of the situation, and to conceive a part for himself to act; but he lacked the energy and constancy of nerve and emotion to quell and subdue an angry mob. He was not really a great man, though he could imagine the greatness that he did not possess. Imagination, however, is effective only up to a certain point; when it comes to an actual material peril, it must be supported by something more solid, or confess itself helpless.

Fairfax, then, was frightened; but he had as yet contrived not to betray it. My apprehension was that, as not seldom happens with frightened men, he would say or do something calculated still further to exasperate his enemies. The only safe

thing now left to him to do was to retire with as much composure and dignity as he could assume. But he still stood in the same place, as if uncertain how to act. I saw his eyes wander over the tumultuous assemblage and seek the place where Mrs. Cartaux had been seated. If she had still been there—if he had had the support of her presence—he might have come out of the scrape with credit. But she was gone, and when he realized that fact, all his precarious self-command gave way. His face twitched convulsively, and he swayed on his feet; it seemed doubtful whether he would burst into tears or fall in a faint.

A mob has no sympathy with weakness, and it never fails to perceive it when it exists. Someone threw an orange which the devil had prompted him to bring in his pocket. The aim was fatally good; it

struck Fairfax full on the forehead, and bursting from the force of 'the impact, was spattered all over his face and immaculate attire. He staggered back, nerveless and bewildered; and what would have become of him I know not, had not two men rushed out from behind the curtain, and, catching him by the arms, literally dragged him out of sight, an ignominious spectacle to gods and men.

CHAPTER XI.

As soon as Fairfax, in the arms of the two men, had disappeared behind the curtain, I pushed my way out of the auditorium as rapidly as possible, and, thanks to a previous knowledge of the plan of the building, got to the rear of the stage, and found the unhappy poet in a state of partial collapse. I took him to the wash-room, where the traces of the orange were partially removed with a towel; he was then muffled up in his overcoat and cap, and we emerged together into the street.

The audience was pouring out of the theatre, talking and laughing; policemen

were trying to keep order among the carriages; it was difficult to move quickly. Fairfax and I were detained for a moment in front of the main exit, and in that moment Mrs. Cartaux crossed the sidewalk with a friend to enter her brougham. I could feel Fairfax grip my arm with a sudden spasm of emotion; Mrs. Cartaux turned just then, and her eyes met his. An expression of contempt flitted across her beautiful features; she entered the carriage and closed the door after her. The coachman drove away.

I hurried Fairfax along, and getting clear of the crowd at last, we hastened in the direction of his rooms. Neither of us had spoken a word since the start. It was no use my asking how he felt. It was sufficiently evident that he could not have felt worse. I did not look at his face, but

I could feel him sway occasionally as he walked, and once in a while a sort of groan escaped him. I feared that he might break down before reaching home; so I drew him into a restaurant bar that we were passing on our way, and ordered brandy. Fairfax poured out half a glass full of the spirit, lifted it to his mouth with a shaking hand, and swallowed it in two gulps. It did him good, and when we resumed our way, he walked with a firmer step. Ten minutes brought us to his lodgings. He got out his pass-key, we stumbled up stairs, and entered his room.

Fairfax threw off his cap, and sank into a chair with a heavy sigh. He was a sorry object to look at. His face was relaxed, white and haggard. His eyes seemed to have contracted to half their ordinary size. His lips were parted, and he was breathing

quickly, with occasional longer gasps. I once saw a man who had been beaten in a foot-race, whose condition resembled Fairfax's. But the former was in training and soon recovered; whereas Fairfax seemed to have lost his recuperative power.

"Come, old fellow, I said at length, in as cheerful a tone as I could assume. "You have had a bad quarter of an hour, but it's over, and no bones broken. Now, what do you mean to do?"

"Do!" he echoed, in a dull voice; "I'm done!"

"Stuff, man! brace up! Do you suppose you are the first dramatist who ever had a play hissed? Nobody succeeds until after a dozen failures. You've had a set-back, but you're not beaten. There was enough good matter in this play to make a good success probable in the next one."

"There will never be another, faltered Fairfax. "I'm beaten, once for all. I shall never dare to try anything again. It's ruin!" And he broke down again and began to sob in a helpless manner, extremely painful to witness. He seemed to be thoroughly cowed. I was sorry for him; but such abject weakness is not agreeable to see in a man.

"Come, Fairfax, you must not go to pieces like this," I said urgently. "Let me know what your circumstances are, so that we can determine what is to be done. Do you owe any money you can't pay?"

"Oh, it's no use talking about my debts," he returned, with a despairing gesture. "I owe more than I can ever pay. Everything depended on the success of this play. And the worst of it is, most of it is owing for advances from Cartaux,".

"What is there so bad about that?" said I. "Cartaux is your publisher, and your credit and debit with him will come even in time."

"You don't know," was his reply. "My God! what shall I do?" I must go . . . no; I can't do it! And that look of hers! . . . she has given me up. I wish I was dead!"

"Whom are you talking about?" I demanded. "Who has given you up? Do you mean Mary Gault? If so, you do her injustice."

"Mary Gault?" he repeated, fixing his eyes upon me with a terror-stricken expression, "I can never see Mary Gault again! It's all up with me, body and soul!"

I saw that the time had come to speak plainly.

"Listen to me, Fairfax," I said, standing

before him, and putting plenty of resolution into my voice, "it is not all up with you yet; but you have had a narrow escape; and that escape was due to the very event which you are now making such a fuss about. Do you know what I mean?"

He stared at me, but made no reply. It was proof of his broken condition that my tone and words did not arouse his resentment. He would have acted very differently three hours before.

"You imagine you have been making a great mystery of this affair," I continued, making myself as disagreeable as possible in order if practicable, to rouse him, "but it has not needed much penetration to see what you were about. I have made no special efforts, but I could not help seeing what was before my eyes. I could not help knowing to whom those love-sonnets

were written in that gift copy of your poem. The theme of that poem came from Mary, but the sonnets were not for her. By an accident, I saw you the other day at rehearsal in the private box with a woman; she was not Mary Gault, but I heard you call her 'darling,' and I saw you kiss her. Partly by accident, and partly by some easy investigation, I know that you and this same woman had planned to meet in Philadelphia to-morrow—for what purpose I don't need to ask, nor you to tell me. You intended to start this very night, and she to-morrow morning—ostensibly to join her husband. If you had gone, you would have found me there on your arrival, for though it is no business of mine, so far as you personally are concerned, what becomes of you, yet I am Mary Gault's friend, and for her sake I was de-

terminated to prevent you from disgracing yourself. But, by a great piece of good fortune, your play was a failure, and you have suffered public ignomy; and the woman for whom you have been dishonoring yourself saw what happened, and laughed at it. Unless I am much mistaken in her, she is not the sort of woman to sacrifice herself for a beaten man. So long as you were a success, and society was flattering you, it suited her vanity to own and control you; but you can reflect no credit on her now, and she will leave you in the lurch. If you have sense enough left to perceive anything, you must perceive that it is the best thing that could possibly have happened; and instead of sitting whimpering there, you ought to go down on your knees and thank God for it!"

Heaven forbid that I should ever again

be called on to speak to a fellow-creature as I spoke to Fairfax. But I felt that, if I was to say anything, I must say all, not sparing one word; and the thought of the wrong he had done Mary nerved me to the task. Twice or thrice he tried to interrupt me, but I beat down his voice with my own, and went on to the end. When I had finished, he sat for a while with his chin on his breast, and his hands lying relaxed on the arms of his chair. I could pity him again now.

"What had I better do?" he said at last, in a spiritless way. He made no attempt to defend himself, or to deny my charges. He seemed almost to have lost the faculty of thinking for himself.

"The first thing you had better do is to come to an understanding with Mrs. Car-taux," I said, uttering her name for the first time.

"I can do that," he said slowly; "I am not afraid of her, but I can never face Mary; she will never forgive me."

"One thing at a time," I rejoined.

After a further pause, during which he sat rubbing his forehead with his hand, and pushing his fingers through his hair, Fairfax got up sluggishly from his chair, and went to the writing-table. He took a pen, and with difficulty, as if forcing his unwilling brain to the task, he wrote a letter, dried it with blotting paper, and began to fold it up. Before putting it in the envelope he half turned to me and said, "Do you want to read it? It is to her."

"I certainly do not," I answered, "nor is there any reason I should."

He placed the letter in the envelope, and addressed it. "Will you get a messenger?" he said. "I suppose this ought to go at once,"

“ I will take it myself,” said I.

“ Very well,” he returned apathetically.

“ Is there an answer?”

“ If she chooses. I don’t know.”

It was close upon midnight, but Mrs. Cartaux’s house was not far off, and it was more than probable that the lady would not have gone to bed. But the sleepy servant stared when he opened the door and I bade him deliver the letter at once. I could not tell whether he recognized me, though he had opened the door for me several times before. He turned up the gas in a small side-room, and asked me to sit down. I heard him go upstairs, and then there was silence for some ten minutes. At last there was the soft rustle of a dress in the hall, and, somewhat to my surprise, Mrs. Cartaux herself entered the room.

She had removed her evening costume,

and was clad in a sort of wrapper of black silken stuff, trimmed and embroidered with gold thread. It fell in heavy folds from her shoulders to her feet, and swept behind her on the floor. I had seen her dressed in various ways, but she had never appeared to such good advantage as at that moment. I never saw so enchantingly lovely an object.

As I rose to greet her, she smiled with perfect courtesy, and extended her hand, the wide sleeve of her gown falling back from her white arm as she did so.

"Mr. Boardwine ought to be obliged to you for consenting to come here at so late an hour. How did you leave him?"

"He had a bad time of it; but he is doing better," was my reply.

"Well, it will take the conceit out of him, perhaps," she observed, looking me

straight in the face with those mysterious hazel eyes of hers. I could not help admiring her audacity, but I think she wanted to find out how much I knew of the affair. I knew I was no match for her in subtlety, so I merely bowed, and held my peace. After a pause, she said:

“I presume you know what Mr. Boardwine wrote to me?”

“I have not the slightest idea,” I replied. “He offered to read it to me, but I declined.”

She looked intently at me while I spoke, probably to determine whether or not I was sincere; then she dropped her eyes and was silent a moment. “I hardly know whether it is worth while to send an answer or not,” she finally said, as if in debate with herself. “I believe I won’t . . . or—stop—yes, I suppose I may as well. Will

you tell Mr. Boardwine that, if it is convenient, I should be glad to see him for a moment about noon to-morrow."

"I will tell him," said I, moving toward the door. "Good night, Mrs. Cartaux."

"Good night," she answered. "You must not be such a stranger. Come and see us when you can stay longer."

I walked back to Fairfax's lodgings, gave him the message, and advised him to go to bed immediately. He was sitting almost exactly in the position in which I had left him, staring apathetically at nothing. There was nothing to be done for him; and after making sure that he understood the message, I left him and went home. On opening the door of my sitting-room, I uttered an exclamation of astonishment, for there was my aunt, sitting bolt upright and fast asleep in a chair before the fire. As I

came forward, she awoke, rubbed her eyes, and exclaimed briskly, "Well, where on the face of the earth have you been?"

"Attending to business," I replied.
"What have you done with Mary?"

"She's at my flat, asleep, I hope. She's the finest girl that ever lived." And forthwith we fell into a conversation that lasted well into the morning.

CHAPTER XII.

THE result of our deliberations will appear immediately, and need not, therefore, be stated here. I gave my aunt my bed, and slept on the sofa in the sitting-room. At eight o'clock this woman of iron and whalebone was up and dressed, and appeared before me, looking as fresh as an apple.

“Much obliged for your hospitality,” said she. “You can go in now and get into your morning clothes. I am going to the flat, to breakfast with Mary at half-past eight. You had better go round and look after that Fairfax creature, as soon as you

have put yourself in shape, and had something to eat."

I promised to do so, and she departed; and, standing at the window, I saw her walk up the street with her brisk, determined step. She was a remarkable woman.

About half-past ten, I presented myself at Fairfax's rooms; I found him up, and in far better condition than I had anticipated: his apathy and helplessness were gone, though there were no signs of any revival of the "conceit" which Mrs. Cartaux had charitably wished him rid of. His manner was profoundly depressed, but quiet and unaffected. He was just finishing a long letter.

He said good morning as I entered, but did not offer to take my hand, though he seemed glad to see me. "I have been writing to Mary," he said.

"Why do you write to her?" I asked.
"The better plan, seems to me, would be to go and talk to her."

"Do you suppose I could do that?" demanded he, looking up at me with a sort of incredulous surprise. "I shall never see her again."

"Because you don't care for her any longer?"

"I don't know whether I care for her or not," he replied quietly, "but, however that may be, it has nothing to do with my never seeing her again. I should not be comfortable in her company: I am not a fit person for her to associate with. You needn't suppose, because I have done what I have done, that I am not able to feel reverence for what is sacred and pure."

I thought this frame of mind was a wholesome one, and I determined to say

nothing to alter it, for the time being. "Your letter is just to bid her farewell, then?" I asked.

"I have written the whole story," he returned. "That is one of the bad results of being a scoundrel. Good people have to know it, and it destroys their happiness and spoils their faith. I couldn't simply tell Mary that I must go; she must know why. It will make her heart ache, I've no doubt: but anything is better than to draw her into the mire."

This kind of talk struck me as being so singularly naïf, that I was a little disposed to question the genuineness of the sentiment that prompted it. It was certainly very different from the man-of-the-world kind of speech that Fairfax had been so successfully practising these latter months; nor did it much resemble the self-centred

and whimsical style of his earlier period. But, as I looked at him, I could not doubt that he was speaking in dead earnest; it was a genuine humiliation, not a make-believe. It was characteristic, perhaps, of the poetic temperament which he certainly possessed. The mood might not last; but while it did last, it was as real as cobblestones. Indeed, if Fairfax's various phases had been individually less real, his character as a whole might have had more reality.

"Well," I said, "the letter will keep till this afternoon. You may as well find out what Mrs. Cartaux has to say before you send it." The plot which my aunt and I had arranged had, in its first form, involved bringing Mary to New York, in order to be on hand when I should come back from Philadelphia with Fairfax. But the failure of the play had of course ~~dis~~changed the

situation, and my aunt and I had agreed that Fairfax should come with me to the flat in the afternoon, where he should suddenly be confronted with Mary, and left alone with her. We had not foreseen his extraordinary alteration of moral tone consequent upon his disgrace, and the sinister aspect of his intrigue. But in any case we relied upon Mary to put whatever was wrong as right as it was possible to be, and she was a person upon whom one was justified in relying.

“Have you any idea what Mrs. Cartaux’s attitude is likely to be?” I asked him.

“I suppose she feels contempt for me” said Fairfax, meditatively, “and is angry that she ever fancied she felt anything else. She will probably tell me that she has only been amusing herself, and regrets to find that the game was not better worth the

candle. I see, now, that she never could have really cared for me. She made herself—and me also—believe that I was something that I was not. She is ashamed of her mistake, and naturally wants me to accept my full share of the blame.”

“Do you think you were mistaken in believing you cared for her?”

“I am certain that I never cared for her,” he replied quietly. “I loved her beauty, and I was fascinated by the license of making love to her. I knew that it must end in disaster one way or the other, and that I was throwing away all the real value of life for a diabolical hallucination. But that only seemed to make it more alluring. I once heard that people who want to make an experiment in suicide, and get the slip-knot round their necks, find their will paralyzed, so that they are forced to

go on and finish the job. It was like that with me."

"However confused your ideas on the subject were at the time, they seem to be remarkably lucid now," I observed.

"I look back upon it now as a man after death might look back upon his life. It all seems a sort of symbol. Mary was my good angel; she brought me whatever I had that was good and true. She gave me the poem that made me famous, and might have made me happy if I had been worthy of it. Mrs. Cartaux was my evil genius; it was under her influence that I tried to change the poem into a play—to degrade it from an ideal into something popular—and thus she brought about my ruin. 'A Dream and a Forgetting!' It's a good title!"

"Have you any plans about what you will do after this?"

"No, none! What difference can it make? I feel as if I could not be personally concerned in anything that is to come. Whatever I was is done with. Even my disgrace is indifferent to me now."

Hearing him speak thus, I became conscious of a kind of regard and respect for him that I had never felt before. The hours of darkness and solitude that he had passed since I saw him had not been without result.

At half-past eleven, he put on his coat and hat, and we went together toward Mrs. Cartaux's house. He showed no signs of nervousness or agitation, and yet such an interview as was before him might have discomposed a much less impressionable man. But he seemed to act almost automatically. At the corner of the street I left him and he went on alone. I learned afterward what happened.

The servant admitted him and he entered the drawing-room. It was empty; he advanced to the open fireplace, and stood gazing at the glowing coals. Presently, he heard a woman's step approaching from behind. He turned slowly, then all at once became rigid and white, and a hoarse cry broke from him. It was not Mrs. Cartaux, but Mary, with her eyes full of tenderness and love. She came smiling up to him, took his cold and nerveless hands in her warm, strong ones, and kissed him on the face: There are still angels in the earth, and they can work miracles.

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When Mary had learned from my aunt, at breakfast, the news that I had furnished the night before, she had thought it over, and presently announced her determination to go to Mrs. Cartaux before the hour ap-

pointed for Fairfax's arrival, and speak to her as one woman to another. My aunt at first opposed the idea; but though my aunt is, as I have said, a remarkable woman, and able to manage almost anybody, she is powerless before Mary Gault when Mary has set her heart on anything that she feels to be right.

Was there any precedent for her going to see a woman who, by every social canon, was her most inveterate enemy? If there be any, I have not met with it in my experience. Mary did not argue the point, nor did she refuse to listen to all my aunt's arguments; but these gradually ran themselves out and were silenced by the mere expression of Mary's face, and the sublime conviction of her manner. My aunt reflected, very sagaciously, that if Mary could vanquish her it was not to be believed that

she could not vanquish Mrs. Cartaux, or anybody. So she finally gave her consent; and Mary, who had intended to go whether or not, thanked her, and went.

I have often wished that some Diable Boiteux had enabled me to be present, unseen at that interview. The other scenes of this story, where I did not attend in person, came to my knowledge afterward, in various ways; but of what passed on that occasion I could form only a vague conjecture, deduced from the results. As a novelist, moreover, I perceive that the episode in question would be of high importance in developing the characters of the actors in it, and rounding out this story of their lives; and I have been accordingly tempted to invent an account of it out of my own head. But I doubt my ability and give it up.

Yet I cannot help often speculating about it. I know both the women well; I can almost imagine what must have happened. I can imagine Mrs. Cartaux's first glance of polite surprise and inquiry, when Mary, with a certain rustic straightforwardness that belongs to her, made known her name. Then the sudden change of expression with which she received the information that Mary was Fairfax's betrothed wife; for it is to be remembered, in Mrs. Cartaux's behalf, that she never knew of Fairfax's engagement at all until she learned it from Mary's lips. Next, I can see her eying the country girl with tigerish watchfulness while she proceeded quietly and with divine ingenuousness to unfold her mission, and to speak, with artless security of things which the most accomplished woman of the world would

hardly dare to hint at. And by degrees I see the strong, innocent magic of Mary's eyes begin to overpower her; she struggles and resists, but she is confronted by a soul purer and loftier than her own, a heart enfeebled by no selfish interest, a nature in whose honesty and singleness Mrs. Cartaux tries to disbelieve, because, otherwise, her whole cynical creed of life must be overthrown, and her own sin stand before her unforgivable. But she must yield; yes, she must yield, and tremble, and break down, and bury her face in her hands; and all the thwarted passion of her life, and her defiant pride—all the established evil in her is shattered to pieces, and dissolved, and swept away in a tragic tumult of strange tears, leaving her nothing, nothing to stand on or to live with, nowhere to take refuge and hide herself, nowhere—

save in the forgiving arms of her beautiful enemy, her friend of friends!

But after all I may be wrong, and the affair may have gone on in quite a different way. The result, however, is indubitable. The two women parted cordial friends, and will remain so to the end of their lives, though they have never met again from that day to this. During the hours they were together they told their whole hearts to each other, and to one of them, at least, the confession was a blessed one. Mr. Cartaux is a much happier and more domestic man than he used to be; I wonder if it has ever entered his head to ask himself why his wife's manner toward him changed so much for the better! If so, he probably came to the conclusion that she had at last recognized his extraordinary merit.

Mary paid Fairfax's debt with her own little fortune. In the spring they were married, with starvation staring them in the face. At the wedding in the village church, just as they were about to stand up before the clergyman, a basket of white roses was sent in, and placed on the steps of the altar; and there was one great red rose in the midst of the white ones. No name came with them; but none was needed; Fairfax and Mary knew well whence the roses came.

They did not starve, though Fairfax has written nothing since, and probably never will write any more. That dangerous, uncomfortable genius of his seems to have vanished, and I for one cannot regret its departure. He is much better and happier without it. But he worked on his farm with great success and prosperity, and

Mary began to grow roses for the New York market, and, much to her own surprise, is now in a fair way to make a fortune much larger than the one she gave away. She is very happy, and reverences her husband as a superior being; whether he is as happy, I cannot say. To dwell in heaven before your time may not be happiness.

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THE END

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